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The Women's Municipal League of Boston

# BULLETIN

February, 1916

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

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THE WOMEN'S MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF BOSTON

# BULLETIN

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THE WOMEN'S MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF BOSTON

# BULLETIN

February, 1916

*The object of the League is to educate and organize among the women of Boston and the surrounding communities an intelligent, representative, public opinion which will exert its influence in the public service.*

## FOREWARD

The Governor of the Commonwealth has said:

"It is the first duty of a state to conserve its citizens." Is not the home the foundation stone upon which to build? Air, light and proper sanitation make for health, physical and moral, and for efficiency in our future men and women.

The good housing of animals has shown its economic value, and communities are beginning to learn that the cost to the state of those men and women who fall below the normal standard of health and morals, can also be reckoned in the dollars and cents paid in taxes to support our hospitals, asylums, reformatories and prisons.

Housing standards now established in such cities as Grand Rapids, Duluth and Columbus; experiments along comprehensive lines, notably in Washington, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Salem (recently), Youngstown and Akron, have demonstrated to housing experts that tenement and cottage property can be conducted on a business basis.

Should not Boston look to her Chamber of Commerce, her public spirited citizens and social organizations, to get together and make an adequate plan for the future housing of her working people?

The Department of Housing in presenting this report of conditions brought to light during its five years of inspection,* hopes it may inspire all interested in the work to help by every possible means the advancement of some plan to remedy the evils, so that the question can no longer be asked,—**"Why are such conditions allowed to exist in Boston?"**

AMELIA H. AMES,
*Chairman of the Department of Housing.*

*With the exception of those of cellar tenements, which were taken in 1914, all photographs included in this report have been taken within the last six months.

## HOUSING CONDITIONS OF TODAY IN BOSTON *

The history of the Housing Movement in Boston begins with the fire of 1872. At that time, a building code was established, which was remodeled in 1885 and again in 1892 and 1894. In 1885 an Act was passed relative to "the preservation of health in buildings in the City of Boston". Since then, various important investigations in tenement houses and others, have been made from time to time. In 1888, the first of these was made by Professor Dwight Porter of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Three years later, an exhaustive report was made by the State Bureau of Statistics of Labor. In 1895, a special committee of the Common Council investigated conditions in the North End and reported that the tenement houses were a serious menace to public health. In 1898 the Twentieth Century Club undertook an investigation of living conditions among the poor "for the purpose of creating such a public sentiment as would make it impossible for houses, of any sort, which were not fit for men and women to live in, or children to grow up in, to continue longer to exist in Boston." To this end, a pamphlet was published, describing a large number of unfit tenement houses, and proving their unfitness by plans and illustrations. In 188~~9~~7 the State Bureau of Statistics of Labor issued another report, making comparisons with its previous one of 189~~5~~4, on conditions in certain districts.

In 1903 a Commission was appointed by Mayor Collins to investigate tenement house conditions in Boston, and make such recommendations as it deemed proper. This resulted in recommendations for the strengthening of the tenement house laws; for suitable increase in the number of inspectors in both the health and building departments; also that one member of the health board be appointed to supervise tenement house administration, so that tenement house problems might be treated with greater efficiency. This report was duly pigeon-holed.

In 1906, Mayor Fitzgerald appointed a committee to rewrite the Building Code. When completed, it was found that the tenement house clauses had been excluded. The housing committee of the Massachusetts Civic League called the mayor's attention to this fact, and offered its tenement house code for consideration; this was embodied in the provisions, and in 1907 became law,— the Revised Building and Sanitary Code of the City of Boston, now in use.

In 1910 the housing committee of Boston's 1915 movement

* With the exception of No. 2 on page 53, and No. 4 on page 54, (which are exteriors) all photographs are necessarily flashlights, owing to the extreme darkness of the places.

made a study of "Congestion of population in certain parts of the city, and its bearing on the health and growth of the city, as a whole," and issued a report of the results in great detail.

The disclosures made by the Boston 1915 housing report, and the startling exhibit which it showed at the old Art Museum, were directly responsible for the organization of the Housing Department of the Women's Municipal League.

It is almost twenty years now since Mr. Edwin D. Mead wrote "The battle with the slums has begun in earnest, and is not to cease until the slum has perished off Boston earth, whether it takes five years or fifteen years in accomplishment." Housing workers of 1916 rededicate themselves to the fulfillment of that purpose,— whether it takes five years or fifteen years further, rests with the public.

The history of the housing movement in Boston, therefore, covers a period of over thirty years, a pretty long crusade, with, on the whole, no great success to boast of. For so long as we have in our midst old, dilapidated, unsanitary buildings, often so overcrowded on the land that sun and air are shut out; so long as hundreds of families are allowed to occupy underground tenements; so long as public halls are allowed to remain unlighted; so long as totally unventilated and inadequately ventilated rooms and water-closets continue to be winked at, or, if you will, superficially treated; so long are we justified in condemning Boston's housing conditions.

The housing department of the Women's Municipal League undertook its work of housing inspection, with the consent of the health department, and has, from the beginning, received the hearty co-operation of the officials, in all its efforts.

The purpose of the League was to get in touch with general conditions in Boston, through investigation of apparent violations of law, brought to its attention by interested persons (social workers of all kinds) and by regular inspection in the tenement districts. In this way, the administration of the law by the departments of government could be followed, and the permanence of their methods measured.

The League has in its files records of 2,500 houses and tenements — many complete in every detail, some but partial inspections. One piece of legislation stands to its credit; that for limiting the occupancy of cellar and basement tenements, which was added to the statutes in 1914.

The inspectors of the housing department are prepared to give instructive talks to groups of people throughout the city — suiting the talk to the group. In order to further this part of

the work, a large number of photographs has been taken, illustrating certain present-day conditions in Boston. These may be borrowed by responsible persons desiring to teach what to avoid in choosing a tenement. Many of these photographs have been made into slides for lantern talks.

For the information of all social workers, to whom a knowledge of the sanitary code should be indispensable, a pocket digest has been prepared by the League, copies of which have been sent to a large number of persons; others may be obtained upon application.

For the information of owners and occupants of tenement houses, a two-page leaflet has been prepared, giving in simple language, on one side, the legal rights of the tenant, and, on the other, the duties of the tenant. This will shortly be ready for distribution.

The department also possesses the furnishings suitable for a four-room tenement. These were used for a year and a half with good results, by social workers in the South End, as a means of teaching how and what to buy in furnishing a small house, the tenement itself being used for the instruction of classes in home making.

This year, the furnishings are in South Boston, being used for educational purposes among young Lithuanian women.

In every large city the departments of government responsible for the housing of its people are the building department and the health department. A building in process of construction is in the hands of the former; from the time of completion until it no longer exists, it is in the hands of the health department. It is no wonder, therefore, that this department is so well known to all citizens; probably thousands of people come in daily contact with it, through its officers.

The duties of the health department are manifold; stated broadly, they include the general oversight of public health, and the enforcement of all the statutes and ordinances designed for its preservation.

Many of these statutes and ordinances cover the maintenance of proper sanitary conditions in the homes of the people, and the department has no more important and no more difficult work than the enforcement of these.

From the time the health department was organized many years ago, up to the summer of 1915, it was headed by a board composed of three men, one a doctor of medicine, as required by law. This divided responsibility has, for a long time, been a cause of great dissatisfaction and, periodically, the cry has gone

STREET NO. BLK. WD. DATE INSPECTOR

**BUILDING**

Front-Rear-Brick-Frame Stories-Cel.-Base.-Attic Ap'ts. per floor C. B. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. A. Total 1907— 1907+ Roof leaking

**STORES**

No. Kind Cleanliness Food exposed Living at rear

**BASEMENT** **CELLAR**

(B.F.....) Distance from floor to ceiling Light Damp Occupied (B.F.....) Distance floor to ceiling Light Damp Occupied Cleanliness

| HALLS AND STAIRS | FLOOR | | WALLS | | CEILINGS | | STAIRS | | LIGHT | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Clean | Rep. | Need P. or W. | Rep. | Need P. or W. | Rep. | Clean | Rep. | Degree | W'd'ws to air | W'd'ws to room | Skylight | At night |
| Cellar Base. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**BULKHEAD**

Locked Obst. Windows Moveable

**AIR SHAFTS**

No. Size Covered Cleanliness

**COURTS**

No. Size Paved Repair Drainage

**YARD**

Depth Paved Repair Cleanliness

**FIRE ESCAPES**

Kind Adequate to

**ASH AND GARBAGE RECEPT.**

No. Metal Wood

Covered Where kept Emptied how often Nuisance

**STREET OR ALLEY**

Paved Repair Cleanliness

**OWNER'S NAME** **ADDRESS**

**AGENT'S NAME** **ADDRESS**

**REMARKS**

**NOTES**

Symbols are ✓-Yes. O.-No. G.-Good. F.-Fair. B.-Bad. Dk.-Dark. D.-Dirty.

Form I.

FAC-SIMILE OF FACE OF INSPECTION CARD USED IN HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S INVESTIGATIONS.

| APARTMENT | Kitchen | Living room | No. bed-rooms | Total | NO. ROOMS IN VIOLATION OF SECTION 70 | | | | FIXTURES IN APARTM'T | | | | Water supply | Cleanliness | Light | Ventilation | Repair | RENT | | OCCUPANTS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | With windows | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | To air | To rm. | To sft. | Without Windows | W.C.* | Sink‡ | Wash tub | Bath | | | | | | | Week | Month | Nat. | Fa. | Mo. | Ch —14 | Ch. 14+ | No. Ldgr's | Total |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| WATER CLOSET | * | Location [off-] | Type | Enclosed | Fl. w-p. | Flush ad. | Repair | Wd.-wk. in rep. | Clean | Fl. clean | VENTILATION | | | | | | | | | | Artificial light | Degree natural light | Glass in door | Open'g in, or door not to T. or B. | Partition not to ceiling | Privacy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | | Kind | Shar'd with | To air | To rm. | To sft. | To hall | Gas | Gas light'd | Flame ben'th op'n'g | Odor | | | | | | |
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| ‡ SINK | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Loc. if not in apt. Iron Enameled Enclosed W-s. ad. Repair Wd.-wk. in rep. Clean Rusted Odor

Form I.

FAC-SIMILE OF REVERSE OF INSPECTION CARD USED IN HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S INVESTIGATIONS,

forth that if Boston had a single commissioner, upon whose shoulders the responsibility for unfit conditions could be laid, the day of better things would not be far off.

A year ago the law was changed; the board was replaced by a single commissioner, who has the widest possible power in the administration of his department. The present commissioner was appointed but a few months ago; workers are watching developments.

That division of the health department engaged in the enforcement of the sanitary laws is called the Sanitary Inspection Department; it is in charge of a deputy commissioner, well and favorably known to the general public, through long tenure of office. It is of interest to follow the growth of the sanitary squad:

In 1900 there were 17 inspectors to 560,892 population.
In 1905 there were 17 inspectors to 595,380 population.
In 1910 there were 22 inspectors to 670,585 population.
In 1915, a possible 30 inspectors to 745,439 population — one inspector to each 24,848 people.

These men have authority to enter any building in the performance of their duties, at any hour of the day or night. They are required, however, to inspect tenement houses (houses occupied by more than three families) at least twice a year, and since 1914 the three-family house has been subject to similar inspection. Other types of houses may be inspected only upon specific complaint.

It would be well, in order to show the ratio of growth between the inspection force and the tenement house, if the number of the latter in our city could be stated; unfortunately no accurate statistics are obtainable, either from the health department or, strange to say, the building department.

In the report of the tenement house commission, appointed by Mayor Collins in 1904, this statement occurs:

"It is the opinion of the commission that instead of six or seven thousand tenement houses, there will be in Boston, in the near future, twice or three times that number." Two years ago "about 7000" was quoted by the health department; the building department could not venture an estimate.

Speaking of the personnel of the inspection force — these men are admitted to the ranks through Civil Service examination; there are, however, no especial qualifications necessary; a singular thing, when one considers how difficult it is at times, even for the expert, to properly interpret and apply the law.

Conditions found day by day are directly traceable to the

fact that some of the men are in no way qualified for this work, and of this the department heads are well aware. Not so long ago it was found necessary to discharge one of the inspectors because of incompetence and neglect in the performance of his important duties. There is no reason to suppose that this man was not well able to pass the Civil Service examination, but this did not turn out a full-fledged health inspector, even after a considerable time in office.

When one realizes that much that the law seeks to accomplish is left to the judgment of the inspector — given a man with little or no judgment — we cannot wonder at some of the results obtained.

In its aim to do away with all sorts of unfit conditions in houses erected before the present sanitary code went into effect in 1907, the law is often very indefinite; it could not be otherwise; and it is houses of this class which present the worst problems the department has to meet. It leaves the inspectors to solve many difficult problems, such as, how to get light into dark places; how to carry air into interior rooms and interior water-closets; how a toilet without light, natural or artificial, opening off a hall without light, natural or artificial, can be lighted by translucent glass panels set into its door. Problems such as these require more than merely good judgment, they require technical education and experience.

Issuing orders which cost the owner ten to twenty-five dollars, and which accomplish absolutely nothing, is waste of time and worse, for all concerned.

As superficial treatment is too often applied and accepted, methods are lacking in permanence, and it is necessary to keep on going over the same ground, year by year. (This applies particularly to overcrowding, tenements vacated for unfitness, dark rooms limited as to occupancy, etc.)

Sufficient time and thought should be spent on each individual problem to insure treatment which shall result in positive and permanent correction. In its administration of law, the aim of the department should be to secure the maximum of improvement, never to apply or accept the minimum.

As has been said repeatedly, health boards are only as vigorous as the public demands. When public opinion is asleep, enforcement of law, in its real sense, is virtually nil. If public opinion declared against dark, unventilated rooms and water-closets; against dark, inadequately ventilated rooms and water-closets; against unfit cellar and basement tenements, dark halls, cellar water-closets in multiple houses; — these things would be

short lived, for in the wiping out of all conditions prejudicial to health, personal or social decency, the health department has almost unlimited power. But it will never bestir itself to a full exercise of that power until required to do so by the people. A careless, complacent public is responsible for poor work in any department, and, worse still, much of this public is by no means ignorant of conditions.

In Boston the housing of the people has been and still continues to be placed far down in the long list of duties of the health department. Reasons are advanced why it should not hold too prominent a place — all sufficient, it is argued, but how trifling they appear when one stops to consider what is at stake — the physical and moral well being of thousands of human beings.

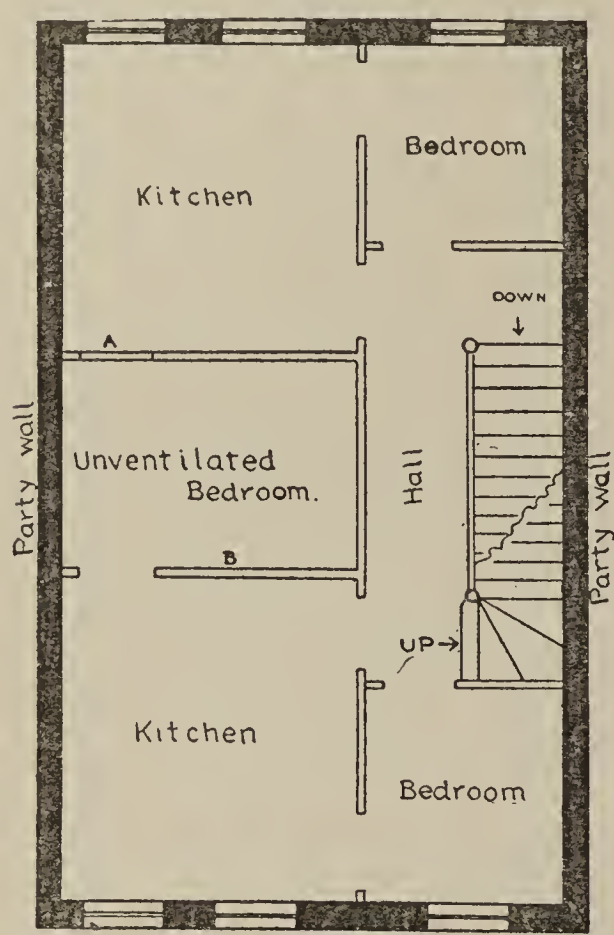
"Bad Housing" doesn't make so direct an appeal, either to the public or to department heads, as germs and microbes, the grip epidemic, and other seasonal ills; it does not cause sudden death, but it does slowly and surely so undermine vitality and resistance to disease that people become easy victims to all the ills which, when they appear, the departments are called upon to fight with vigor, and it adds enormously to the expense which the public is called upon to meet for hospitals, prisons and relief. In the history of the housing movement in Boston, as far back as 1888, General Francis A. Walker said: "I believe that before long public sentiment will have been so educated that it will support the officers of the law in whatever rigorous and painful measures may be required for the thorough, systematic and unrelenting enforcement of the most advanced sanitary requirements; that there will be a general consent of conservative citizens, to regard as thoroughly good politics, all interference by law which may be necessary to prevent a portion of the people from living in houses unfit for human habitation."

During the five years the League's housing department has been in existence there has been a noticeable improvement in general conditions, especially in the North End; there is less clutter in the narrow streets, and, at times, we think, in the homes on those streets.

Some of the most unfit houses have been improved as to light and air; others, having long outlived their usefulness, have finally disappeared, to make way for better buildings. A great deal can still be done to improve the remaining unfit — of which there are many — nevertheless, the eyes of workers are beginning to focus on the West and South Ends and Charlestown, any one of which now deserves the center of the stage, rather than the North End.

Appreciating the activity of the health department within the period of our existence, and the good results obtained, let us now point out some bad housing conditions to be found commonly at the present time, which call for the serious consideration and vigorous action of the department, but which, up to this time, have received only the most superficial treatment.

We have in the City of Boston a large number of dark rooms, inadequately ventilated or totally unventilated. The Tenement House Commission of 1904 reported 5,844 dark rooms in five wards. We cannot state whether more or less exist today. A room in which it is impossible to read newspaper print readily in 75 per cent. of its area is considered dark.



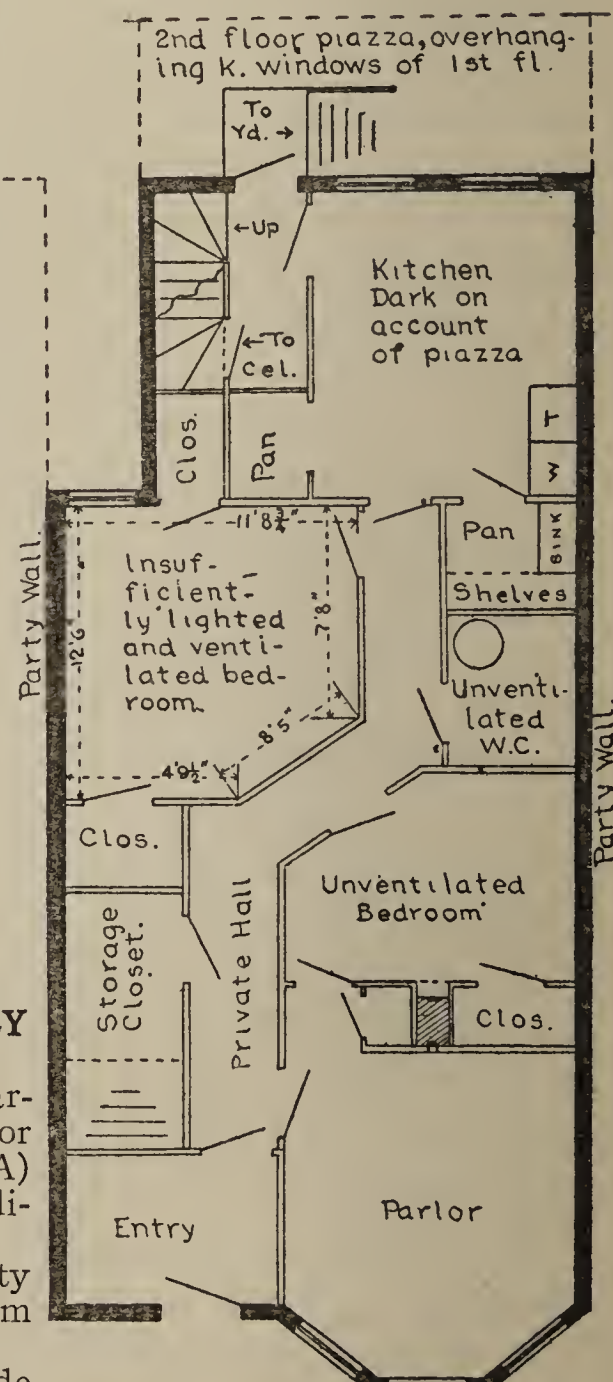

Diag No. 1. STREET

## UNVENTILATED AND INSUFFICIENTLY VENTILATED ROOMS

**Diagram No. 1** A very common floor arrangement of the tenement with the inner or unventilated room. Very often one door (A) into this unventilated room is closed up, dividing the floor into two apartments.

The side walls of such houses are party walls so there is no remedy for such a room except to board it up and prohibit its use.

Sometimes an opening is made in the inside wall at point (B) of diagram, and a window is inserted, but it is easy to see the futility of such a procedure.




Diag. No. 2. STREET

**Diagram No. 2.** Another type of newer tenement (of which Boston has row after row in some sections) having both the insufficiently ventilated and the unventilated room.

The law prescribes that rooms not having direct communication with the outside, shall be provided with sash windows communicating with rooms or halls which have windows to the outside. Under wholly favorable conditions, such windows might prove of benefit to the inner rooms, but unfortunately, windows do not always provide light or air, as, for instance, when they open into a room which in turn, has too limited a supply for its own needs; or when they open upon a brick wall six to ten inches distant; or when they open into a dark hall; again, given a basement room under the front door steps, how much light is likely to reach it through a small piece of glass inserted in the riser of a step? How can air, sufficient for healthful living, by any possible chance, reach such rooms? Are four stories of bedrooms adequately ventilated by a 7¾-inch capped pipe extending through the roof of a light shaft? How

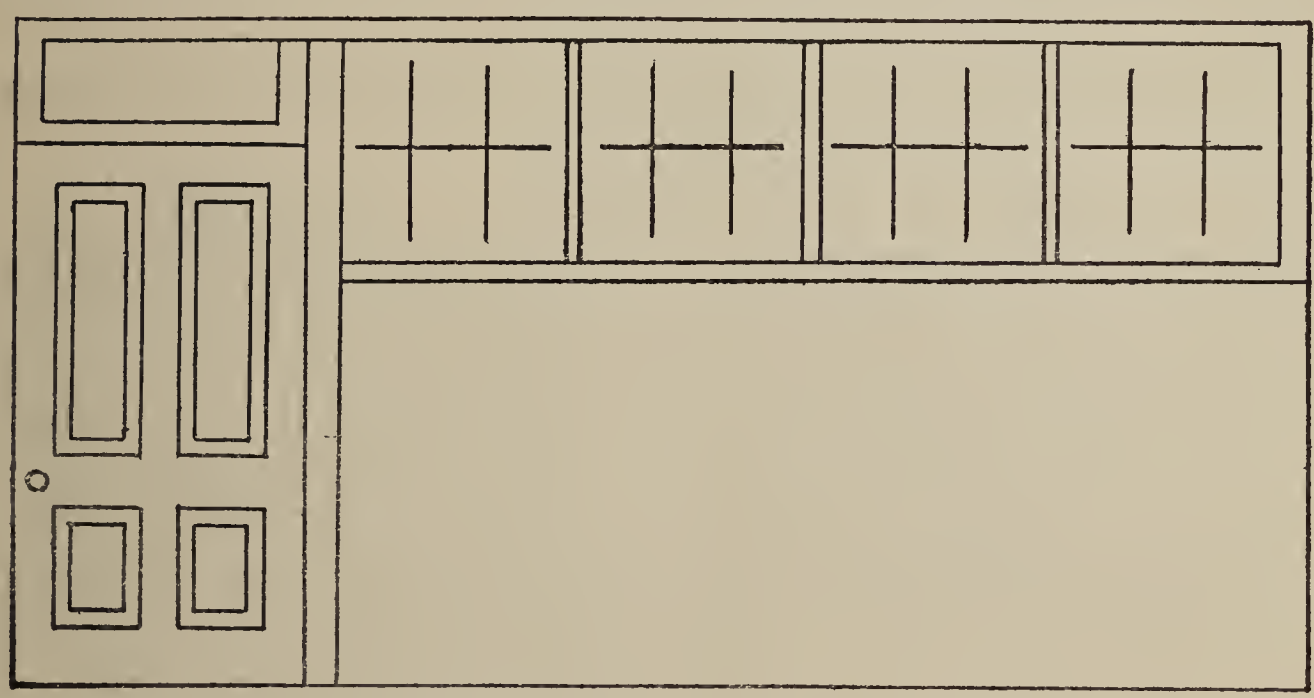


Diagram No. 3.

**Diagram 3.** Shows the wall of a room which has been altered to comply with an order issued by the health department. Before the alterations this was a dark, unventilated room. Since the completion of the alterations it is still a dark, unventilated room. There is a stationary transom, 7″ x 27″, and two glass panels have been inserted in the top of the door. The windows, 26″ x 27″, are unopenable. Though the required area of glass surface may have been inserted, nothing has been accomplished in the way of ventilation by compliance with the regulation.

much air reaches rooms four and five stories below a 10-inch opening under the eaves of a light shaft,* even though of legal dimensions?

Is the room which depends upon a lamp or gas for its light, lighted according to law? We believe that the law seeks to provide for every man, woman and child, the amount of air and

*See text under Diagram 4.

light requisite to healthful living, and to that end gives the health department all the power necessary. As it is impossible to secure one or the other, or both, in many houses in Boston as they now stand, such rooms or tenements constitute a nuisance of the worst sort, and should be condemned for good and all, by our guardians of public health.

We have seen *one* room boarded up because of unfitness; why only one? Boston can boast of a fair share of *totally* unventilated rooms. We are aware of instances in which the department, by word of mouth, forbade the use of certain dark, inadequately ventilated rooms for sleeping purposes by anyone; others, where it has been specified that they are not to be used for sleeping purposes by children, but are considered fit for adults. One wonders who would be held responsible for "adults only." Does the department *expect* permanent results from such footless methods? Of course not; it is aware that it is wasted

INADEQUATELY LIGHTED AND VENTILATED TENEMENTS

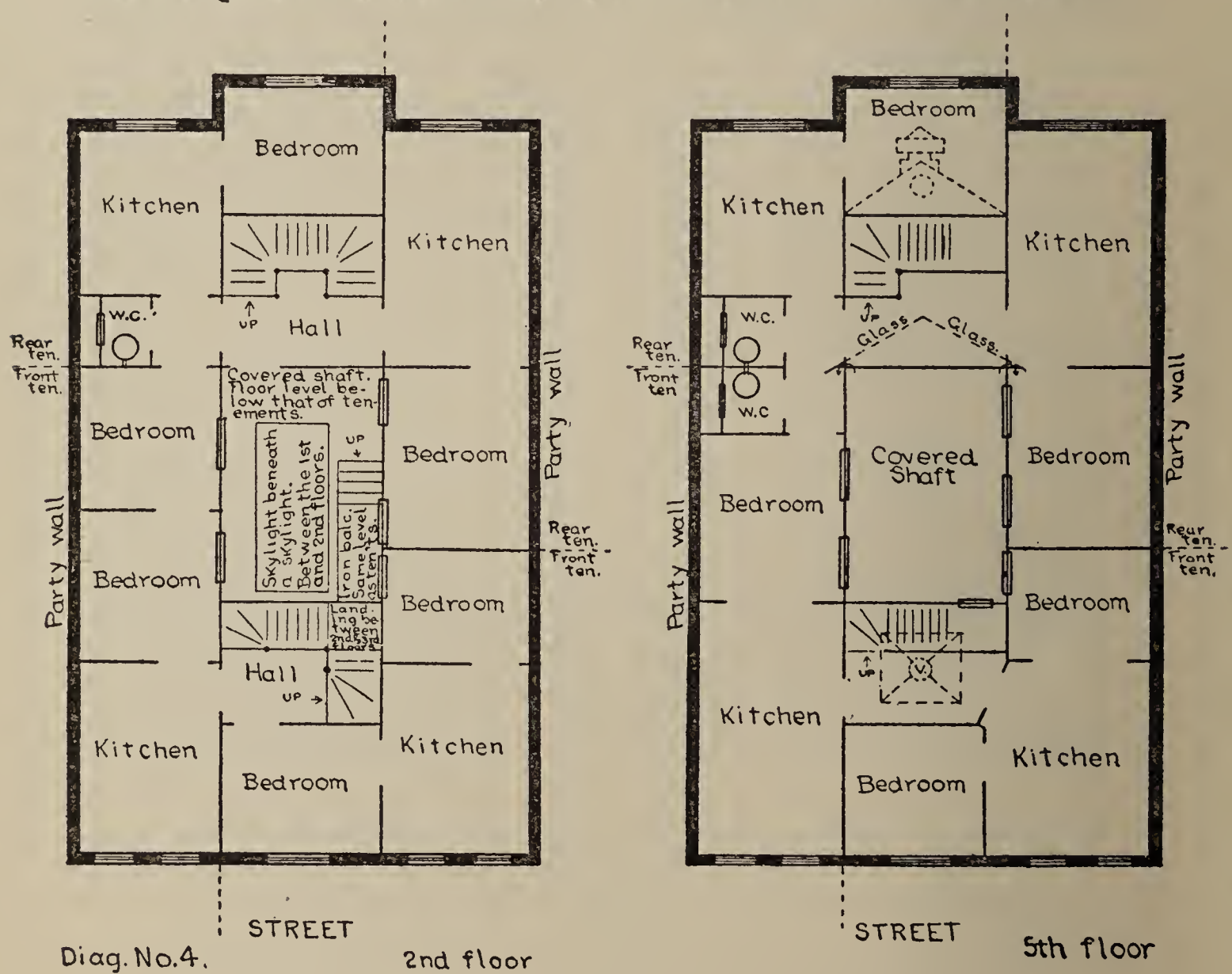
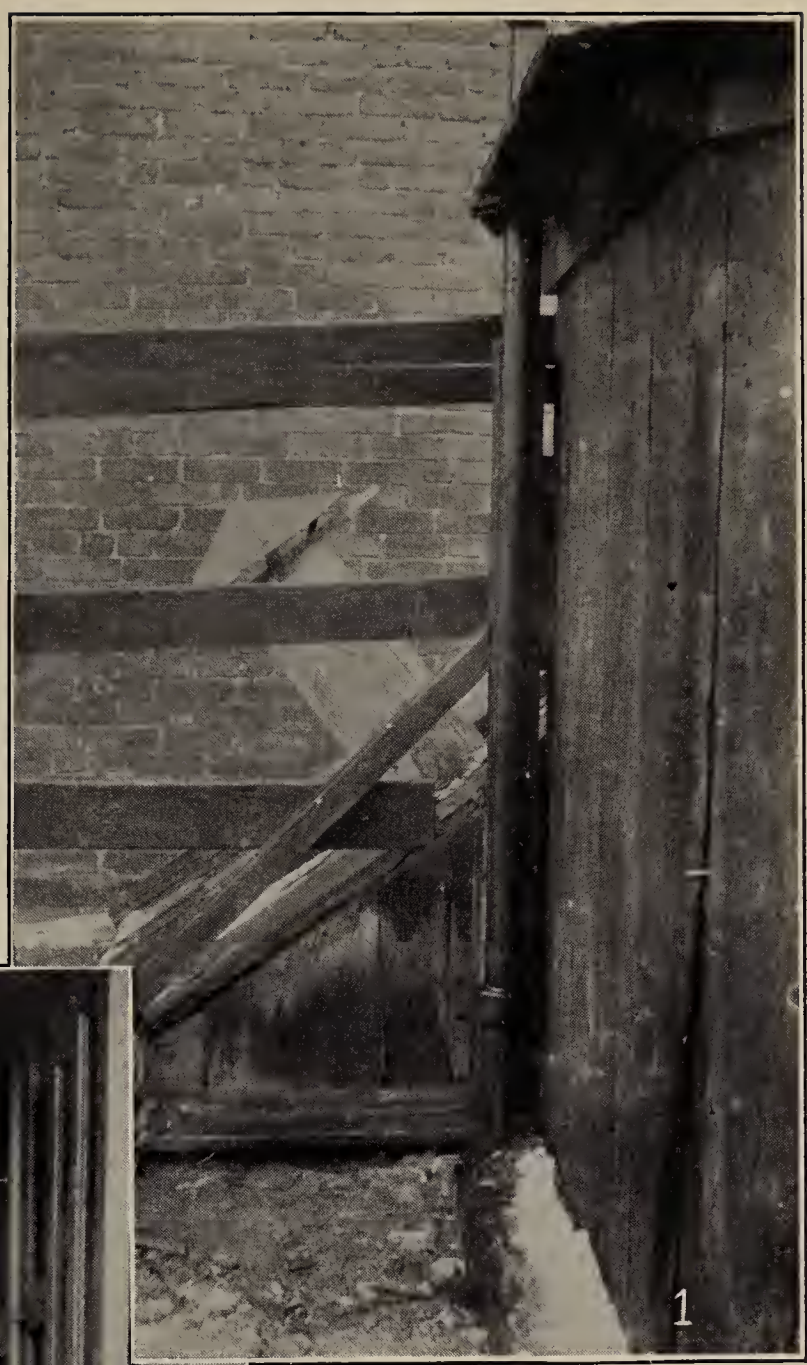



**Diagram 4.** The second and fifth floors of a 1907 Law tenement house, housing sixteen families. The sole ventilation of fifteen bedrooms (there are twenty-three in all) is from a shaft which has only ten inches open space at the upper edge under the eaves of the glass top.

## INADEQUATE VENTILATION OF BEDROOMS.

1. 7¾-inch ventilating pipe protruding from a *covered* shaft. This shaft ventilates the bedrooms, halls, and sink-pantries of a four-story tenement, the kitchens of an adjoining four-story tenement, and is also called upon to indirectly ventilate four water-closets which have unopenable windows and consequently ventilate to the halls.



2. A bedroom window shared with a water-closet. The small portion of the window shown at the left of the partition, or dividing wall, is the only means of light and ventilation that the bedroom has. The shingles on the side of the adjoining house are also shown through the window. This house is but 24″ distant, consequently this bedroom is never lighted and ventilated, even if it were not a fact that the window is shared with the water-closet. In the case of a window being so shared, if the partition is fitted closely enough against the sash to make the separation of the room and compartment complete, it necessarily makes it impossible to open the window.

time, but is fearful of a too liberal use of boards. An aroused public opinion would give it the backbone it needs.

## Water-Closets

Interior water-closets may be found by hundreds in houses built prior to 1907. As no provision is made in the law for the light and ventilation of such places, the means by which this shall be accomplished is left to the judgment of the health department.

Many houses occupied today by numerous families were originally dwelling houses, with water-closets in the cellars. When the law requiring one water-closet for every three families went into operation, extra closets were placed in hallways, under the stairs or under the eaves; in fact, any out-of-the-way corner was turned to account, but without regard to light and ventilation. Even in houses built expressly for the accommodation of several families, bathrooms were so placed between rooms that it is evident ventilation was not considered, unless transom windows to kitchens, dining rooms or bedrooms were intended for the purpose.

Sinks and water-closets in the same compartment are not uncommon; sometimes, incompletely partitioned off; at other times, without a partition of any kind. How adequately to ventilate such water-closet compartments, was one of the problems which the department was called upon to solve in 1907. It devised a method which has since been applied to all cases in which it was impossible to secure direct ventilation. A pipe varying in size from four to eight inches (the latter size is rare) inserted in the ceiling of the compartment and emerging, as a usual thing, on the roof; generally taking in on its upward course the toilets on the other floors. The efficacy of this mode of ventilation depends upon so many things not readily obtainable, that it is safe to say, in a majority of cases, it has the opposite effect to that intended. The bad air is blown back, instead of being carried up. There must be sufficient circulation of air within the compartment to force the foul air upward, and in unheated houses this can be secured only by the use of gas or a fair sized lamp, kept constantly burning. The department attempts to require this, but the perpetual use of gas means increased expense to somebody, landlord or tenant, so this requirement is a dead letter. The other factors necessary to the success of this mode of ventilation are: Good judgment on the inspector's part, and a plumber, or other workman, who knows his business.

# THE BOSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S "VENTILATING PIPE" IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

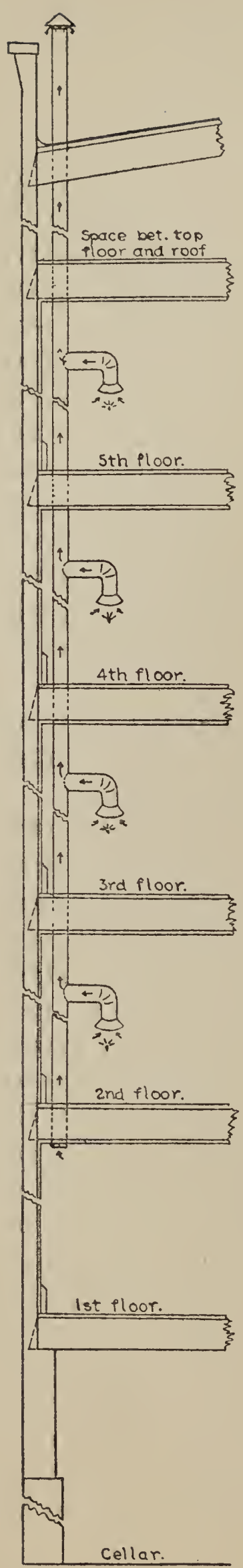


Diagram No. 5.

The health department's theory is that a pipe, starting in the ceiling or wall of the lowest water-closet compartment and carried through the successive floors to the roof, even though it has a branch intake from the water-closet compartment on each floor, will sufficiently ventilate *all* the water-closets, provided that a current of air is somehow created in the compartment. To this end, a gas fixture is supposed to be located so that the flame will be directly beneath the opening of the pipe. But, as a matter of practice, the openings in both the main pipe and the intersecting ones are so varied in construction that the gas pipes and fixtures would have to be as contrary to any known laws of physics and plumbing as the ventilating pipe is to physics and economics. In fact, the main pipe does not always have an intersecting pipe and joint, sometimes it has merely a lateral hole on each floor,[1] or sometimes, owing to partitions and walls, is carried horizontally across the ceiling of a compartment with the same kind of opening in the under-side;[2] we have not yet found one with the opening on the upper side, although we expect to. For variety, we have the short joint without the elbow.[3] Again, there is the cap-like opening which carefully guards the small, lateral opening in the main pipe, which varies from three to six inches.[4]

Contrary to the health department's theory, the air current, if there happens to be one, is just as apt to come down as to go up.

Photographs on the following page show a pipe from which the draught is so strong as to nearly extinguish the flame. The pipe in the one shown on page 27 also has such a reversed current.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

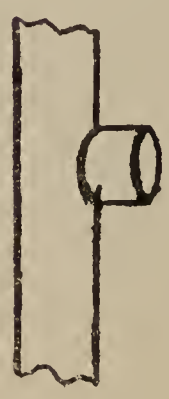


Fig. 3

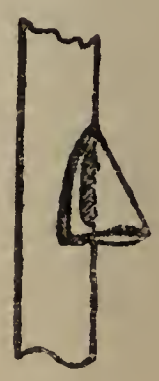
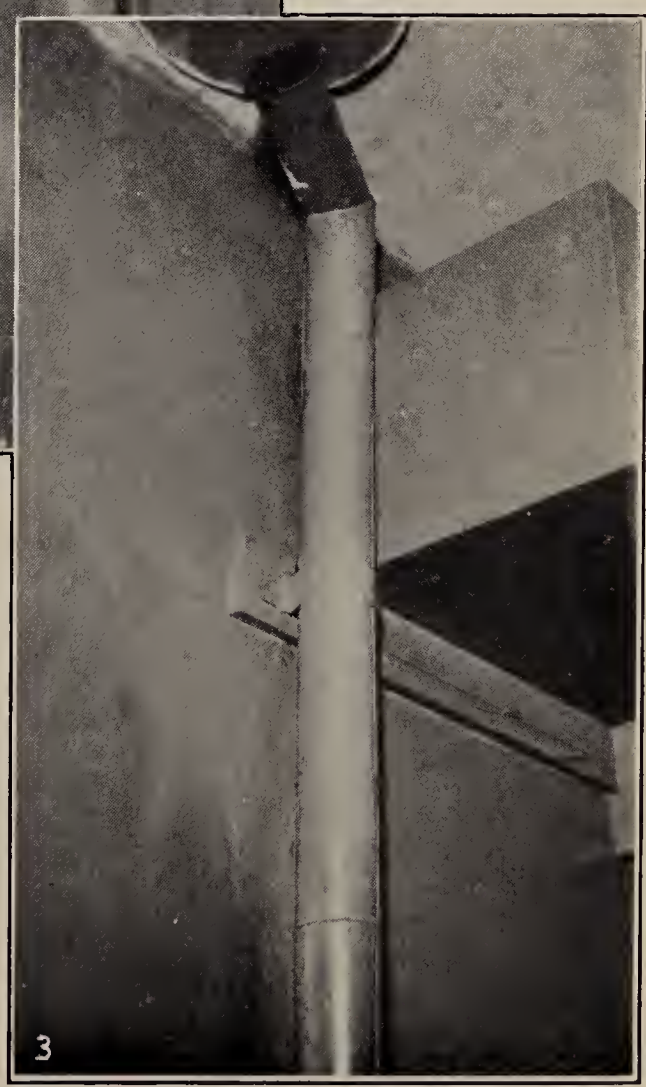


Fig. 4

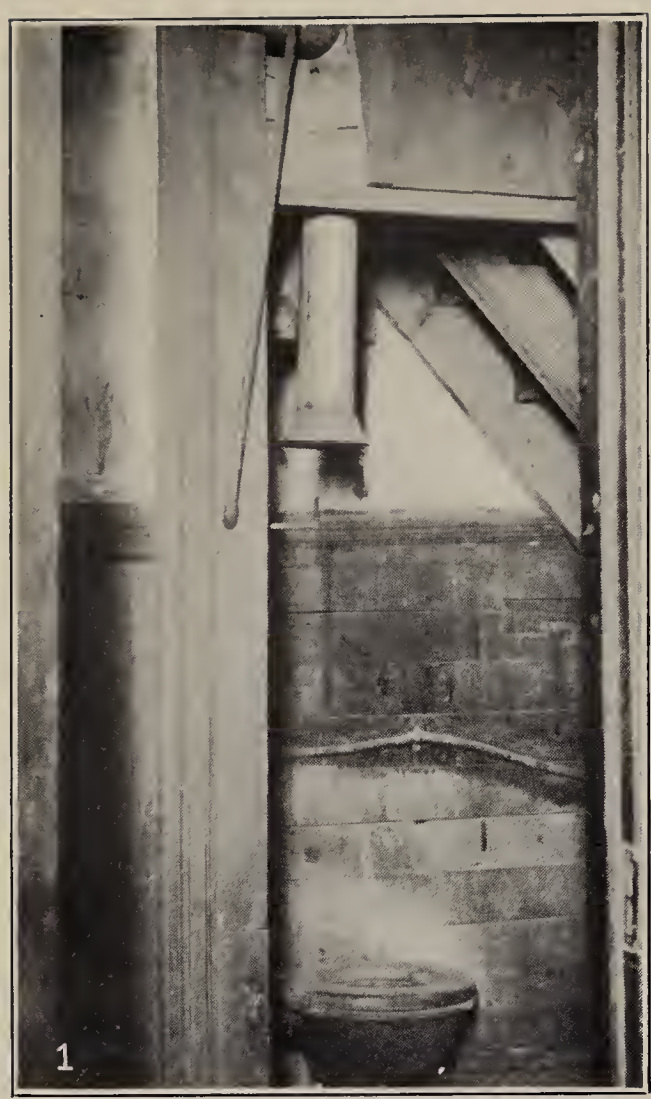
THE BOSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S "VENTILATING PIPE" IN THEORY AND PRACTICE.

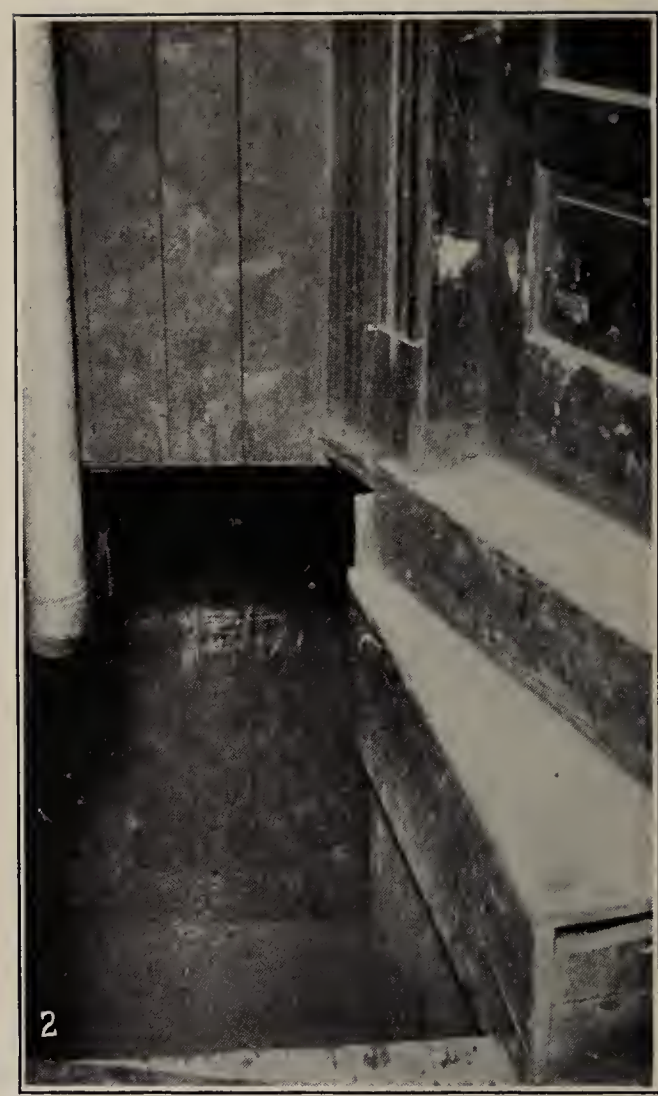
1. Ventilating pipe on second floor. (Unfortunately, the camera missed the elbow turn, but the main pipe shows at the right of the photograph, and the point where the elbow joins is just where the photograph leaves off, and very similar to the one on the third floor.)

2. Elbow, joining the main pipe on the third floor.



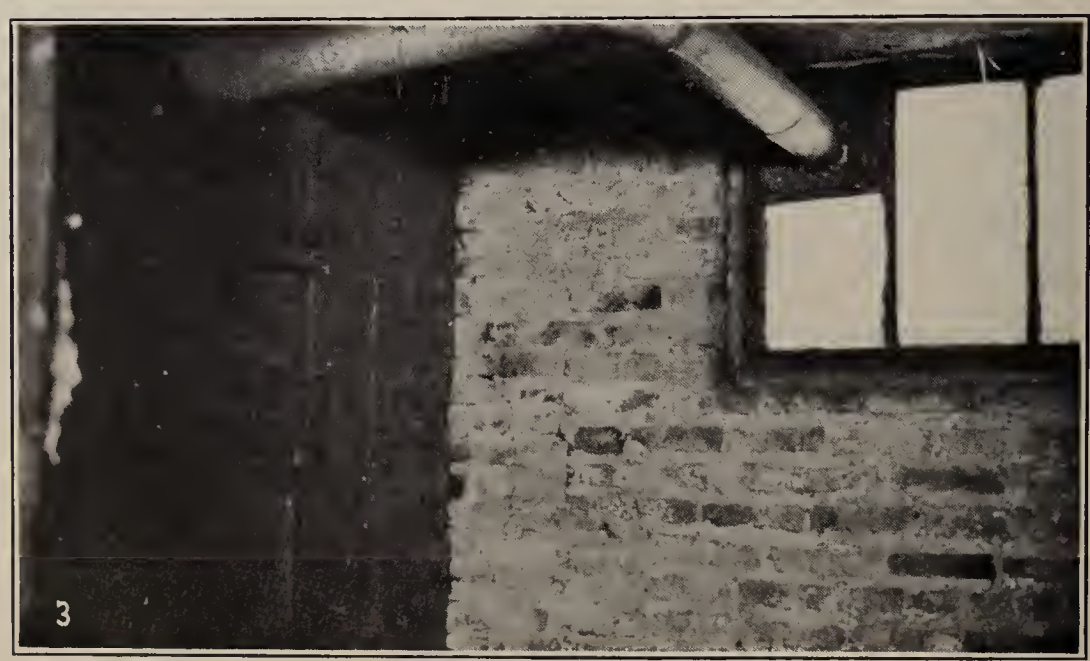
3. Exit of main pipe in fourth floor compartment, instead of pipe being carried through ceiling and to outer air. (This section is horizontal, or parallel with the ceiling, though, owing to the position of the camera, it does not look so.)





1. Ventilator pipe shown in diagram No. 6. Photograph taken from kitchen, showing starting-point of pipe.

2. Continuation of pipe. Photograph taken from entry, looking down subcellar stairs, showing portion of vertical (downward) part of pipe, and door to adjoining tenement.

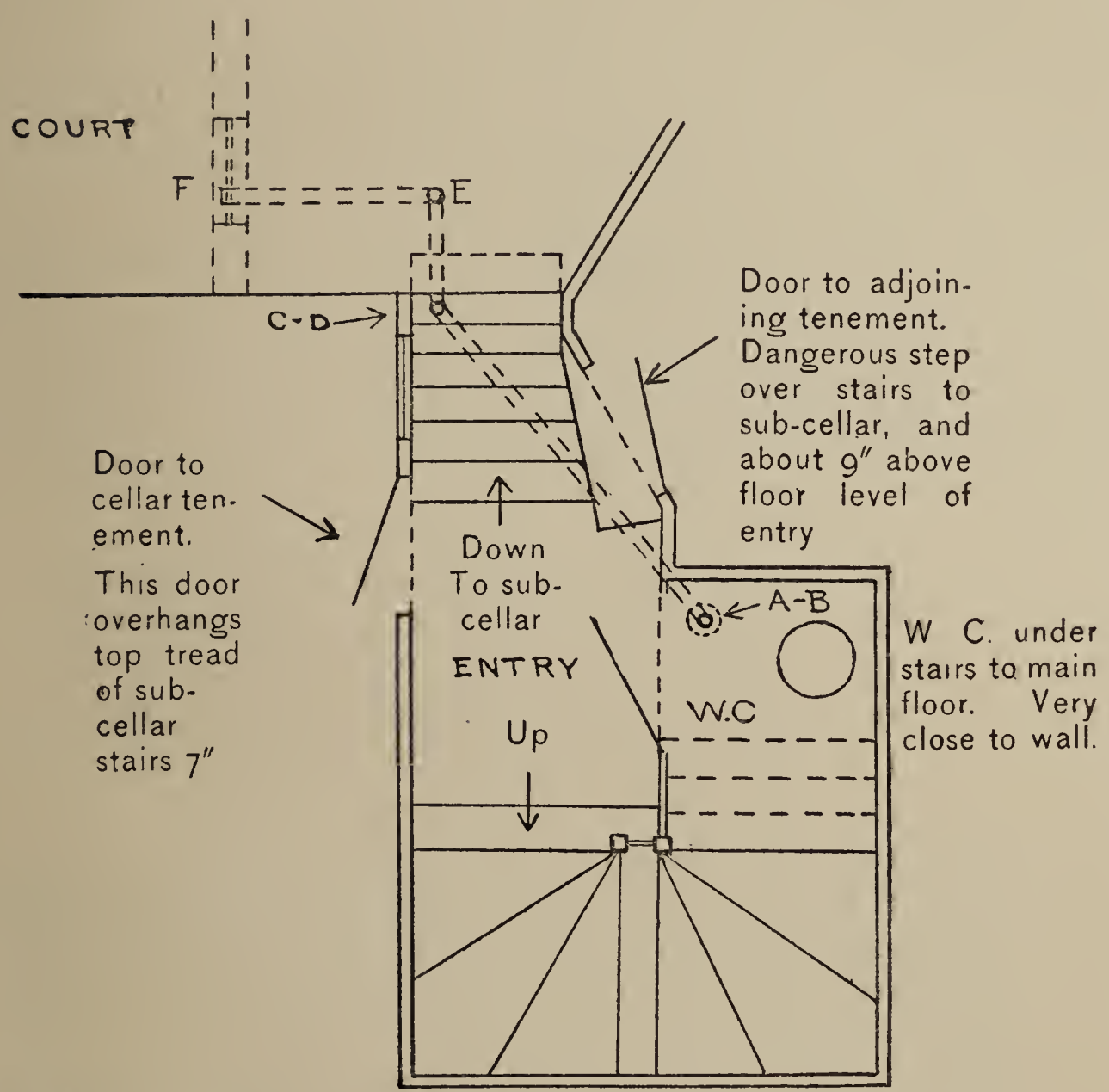


3. Last two turns and exit of pipe. Photograph taken from floor of subcellar.

The contrivances sometimes found beggar description. Think of this ingenious device which cost the landlord twenty-five dollars: A 4-inch pipe inserted near the ceiling of a water-closet, wanders, by various twists and turns, down a flight of stairs through a subcellar to an outlet in the yard some eight feet below its starting point! Another hall water-closet compart-

THE BOSTON HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S "VENTILATING PIPE" IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

DIAGRAM NO. 6.




A—Starting point of ventilating pipe, over gas jet.
A-B—V-pipe, upward, 2′ 2″.
B-C—V-pipe, horizontally and diagonally across entry, 5′ 2″.
C-D—V-pipe, downward, to ceiling of cellar, 7′ 7½″.
D-E—V-pipe, horizontally along ceiling of cellar, 2′ 6″.
E-F—V-pipe, 2′ 9½″, with 4″ drop from horizontal at exit end, which exit is through window near ceiling of subcellar.

The exit is about 8′ below the starting point, with 4 turns between, and a length of only 2′ 2″ is vertical (upward), and 7′ 7½″, vertical (downward).

There is a step up on entering toilet.

The gas flame is 6″ from the edge of the door and at just the right height to set one's hair on fire as one stoops to step up, or stumbles in.

There is a 1″ crack in the w. c. door.

The hall is dark.

ment located partly under the stairs, has a partition which falls short of the ceiling, leaving a large open space at the top. The starting point of the pipe may be seen in the slanting ceiling over the open space and under the stairs. Passing through the stairs it emerges from the top tread, crosses the hall, and from that point is carried to the roof two floors above.

At times the failure of these pipes is due to other all-sufficient reasons; the owner apparently obeys orders. A pipe is carried through the ceiling, but — goes no further! Again, the pipe admits cold air; the tenant objects and it is forthwith stuffed with rags. The absolute futility of such a method is evident in almost every instance where it has been applied, therefore, it is high time the department devised some more effectual means of securing ventilation for interior water-closets, so that in this respect such places may cease to be a source of nuisance in the tenement house.

What can be said by anyone in defense of the wholly uncivilized cellar water-closet in the multiple house? Even though prohibited by law in the tenement house, except with a permit, they are to be found in use, *without* such permit; and in hundreds of three-family houses these sources of ill health are the only "conveniences" furnished for the use of families living one, two, three and sometimes four flights above them.

Realize, if you can, cellar conditions in multiple houses; that cellars are often dangerous of approach, often impossible of approach through misuse and vast accumulation of truck; that even the average cellar is either dark or dim; imagine in the center of such a place, as far away from the door as possible, one, two or three water-closets, and picture the result! Is it any wonder that such closets are, as a general thing, so filthy that they cannot be used? That children are afraid of them? We know that buckets and various utensils are often used in the tenement as well as in the cellar itself, and the contents thrown at the hopper.

Another vital objection: Cellars are frequently left open and are, therefore, accessible to all passers — the drunken loafer among them. **Why should women and children be subjected to any such danger?**

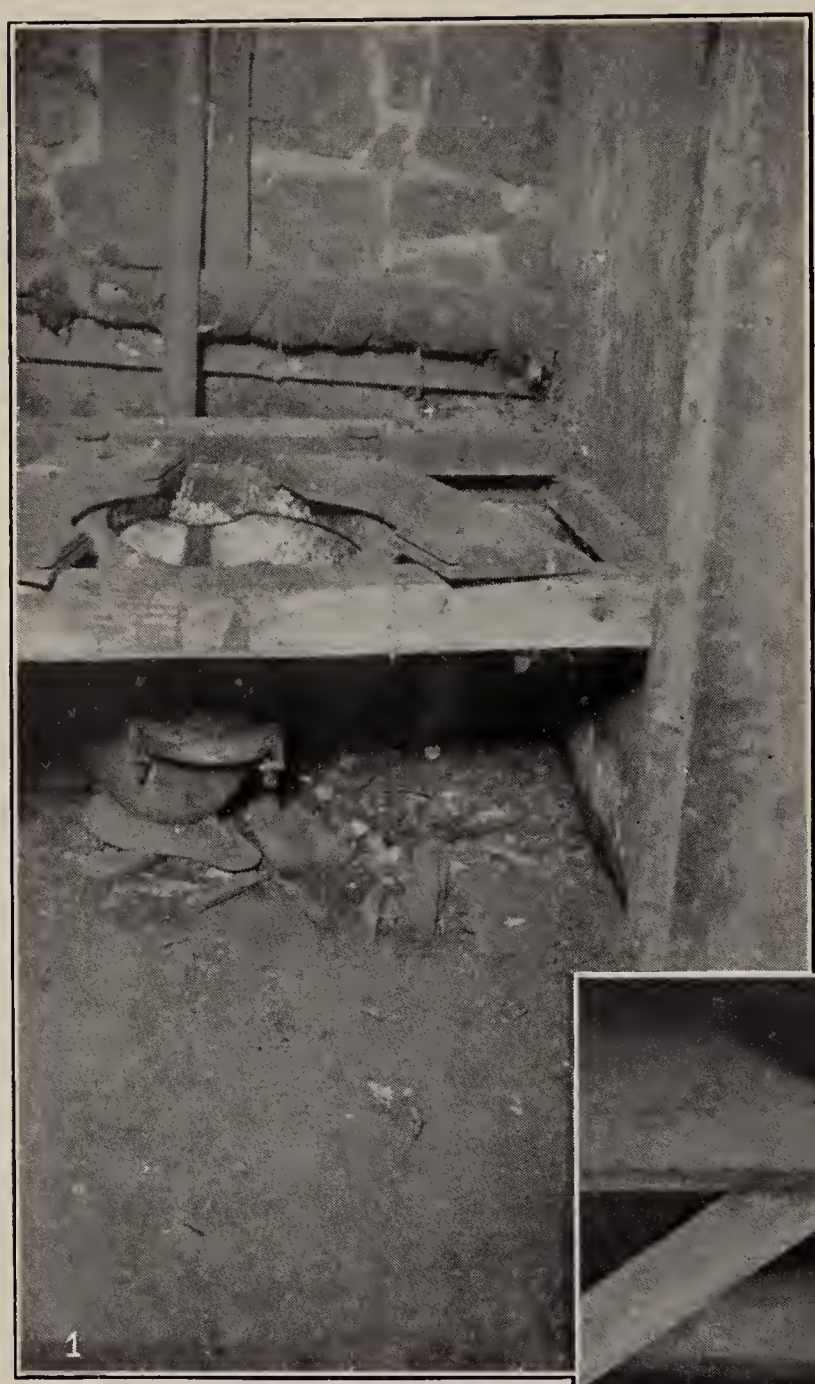
There is no doubt that the health department is opposed to the cellar water-closet and hopes to rid the city of it in time. But the situation does not admit of undue delay; excuse for its continued existence should neither be made nor accepted, as it is even worse than the outdoor water-closet, which, at least, has the merit of being in the open, and against which the department

## THE OPEN-TOP WATER-CLOSET COMPARTMENT.

Two examples of water-closets located in halls. In the case of No. 1 no ventilation whatever is attempted, and as the partition is not carried to the ceiling the foul air permeates the hallways, and the darkness of the compartment only adds to the filth of the hopper. The compartment also lacks privacy, owing to the low plain glass window.

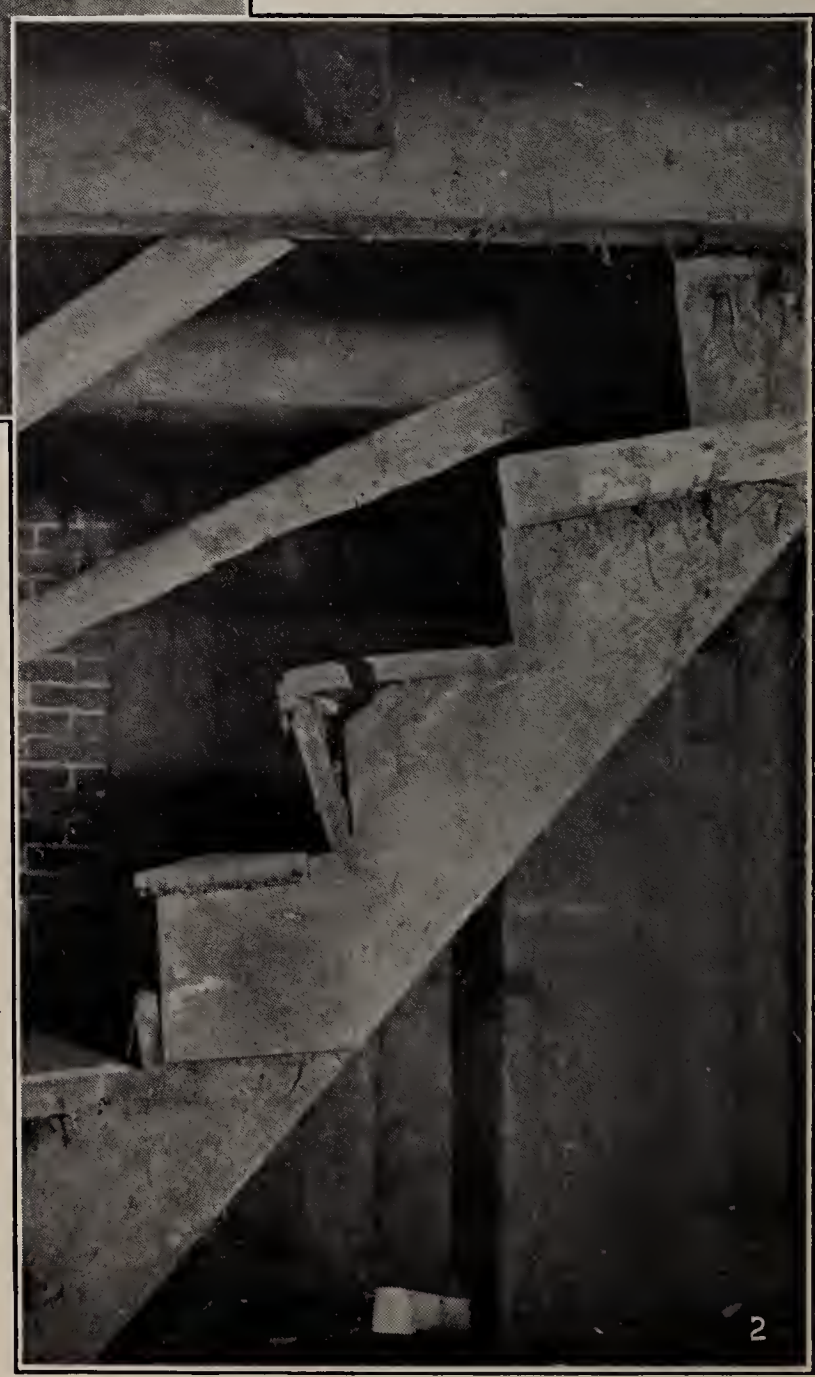
No. 2 shows a water-closet with similar bad features to those of No. 1, with the added one that this compartment is partially tucked under the stairs, which, however, are so narrow that it extends part way into the hall. The open top is clearly shown. The fixture is necessarily located under the slant of the stairs, in such a position that it is impossible for one to sit erect. But the crowning feature is the method used to induce the foul air to explore the outer regions instead of the halls, and to this end a ventilating pipe has been installed. If one carefully examines the slanting ceiling over the open top of the compartment, he can discover the starting-point of this ingenious device,—what looks to be a small hole, but is really the starting-point of the ventilating pipe. This adventurous little pipe meanders through the ceiling, up through the next floor, then scrambles along the walls in a zigzag direction till it reaches the attic ceiling, and there forces its way through to the outside air.

Evidently the theory of the genius that invented this particular one of the many similar ventilating pipes in Boston's quiet places is that the foul air will concentrate itself into a peak and make its hasty exit through the small dust-and-cobweb-clogged pipe without contaminating the air of the hall.




## NUISANCES CAUSED BY NUISANCES.

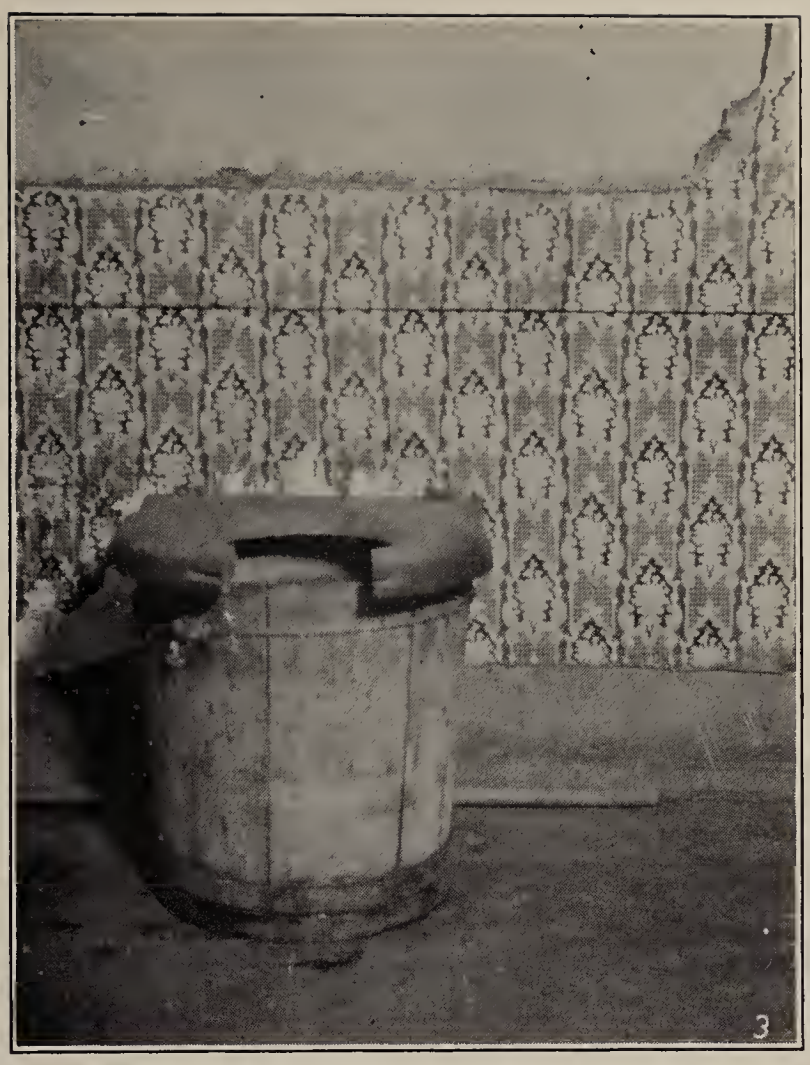
1. Cellar water-closet. This water-closet is used by four families and occupants of a barber shop. Not only broken and poorly constructed, but leaking. The floor is wet and soggy and, like nearly all cellar water-closets, the compartment is totally dark.




2. The cellar stairs leading to the water-closet in above photograph, the construction of which is very common among the old tenements, and they are frequently broken in this manner. The wooden door under the stairs is straight; using this as a guide, note the slant of the treads, especially the top one; also note the second tread and imagine the result should any one trust his weight on it in the dark.

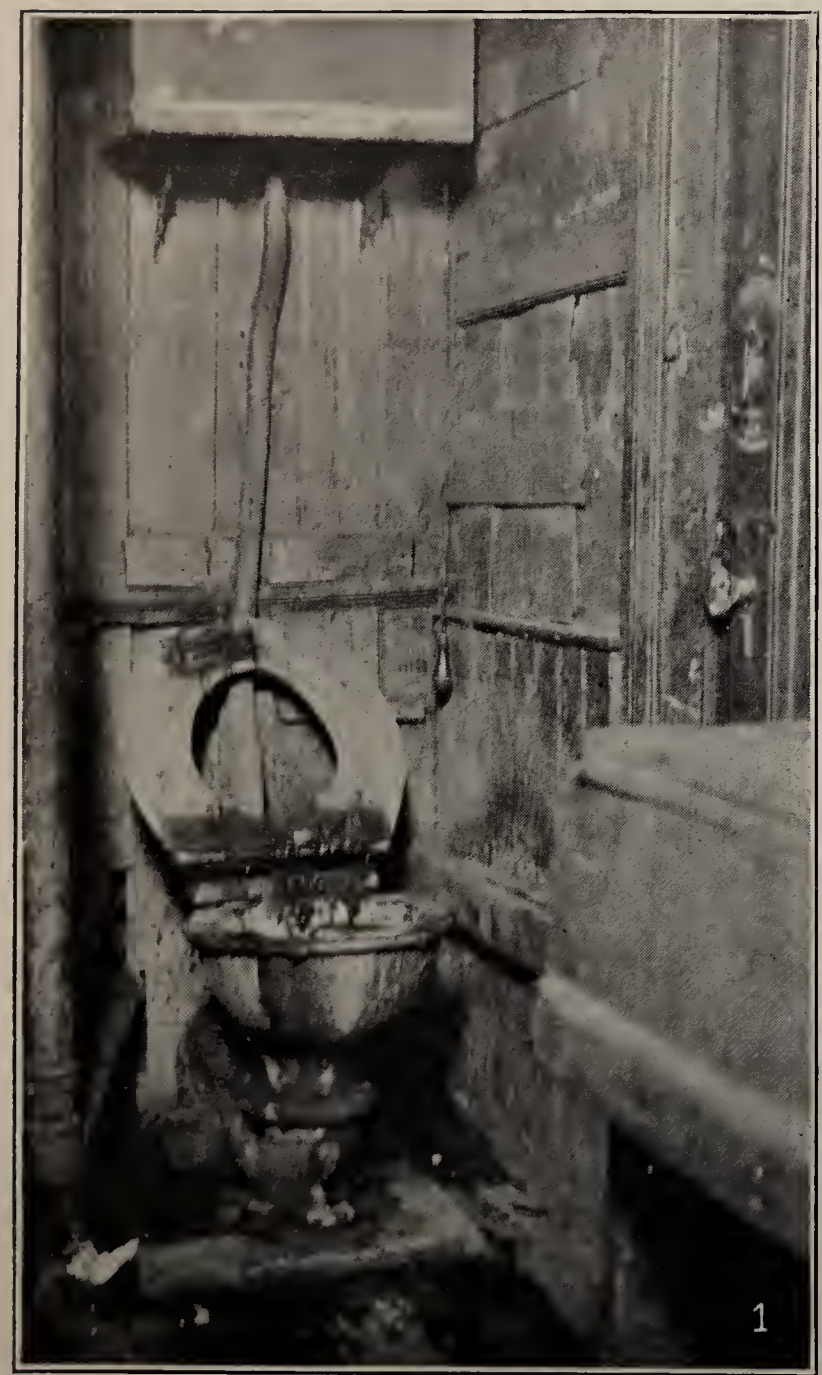
THESE STAIRS ARE ALWAYS DARK.

3. This convenience is kept in a bedroom and used in lieu of the unfit cellar water-closet.



UNFIT CELLAR WATER-CLOSETS OFTEN RESULT IN MISUSE OF CELLARS.

A corner of a low-studded, dark, wet, indescribably filthy, and misused cellar. In addition to being misused throughout, the pail is also used in lieu of the toilet. ANOTHER RESULT OF AN ABSOLUTELY UNFIT CELLAR WATER-CLOSET, BOTH AS TO CONDITION AND CONSTRUCTION.

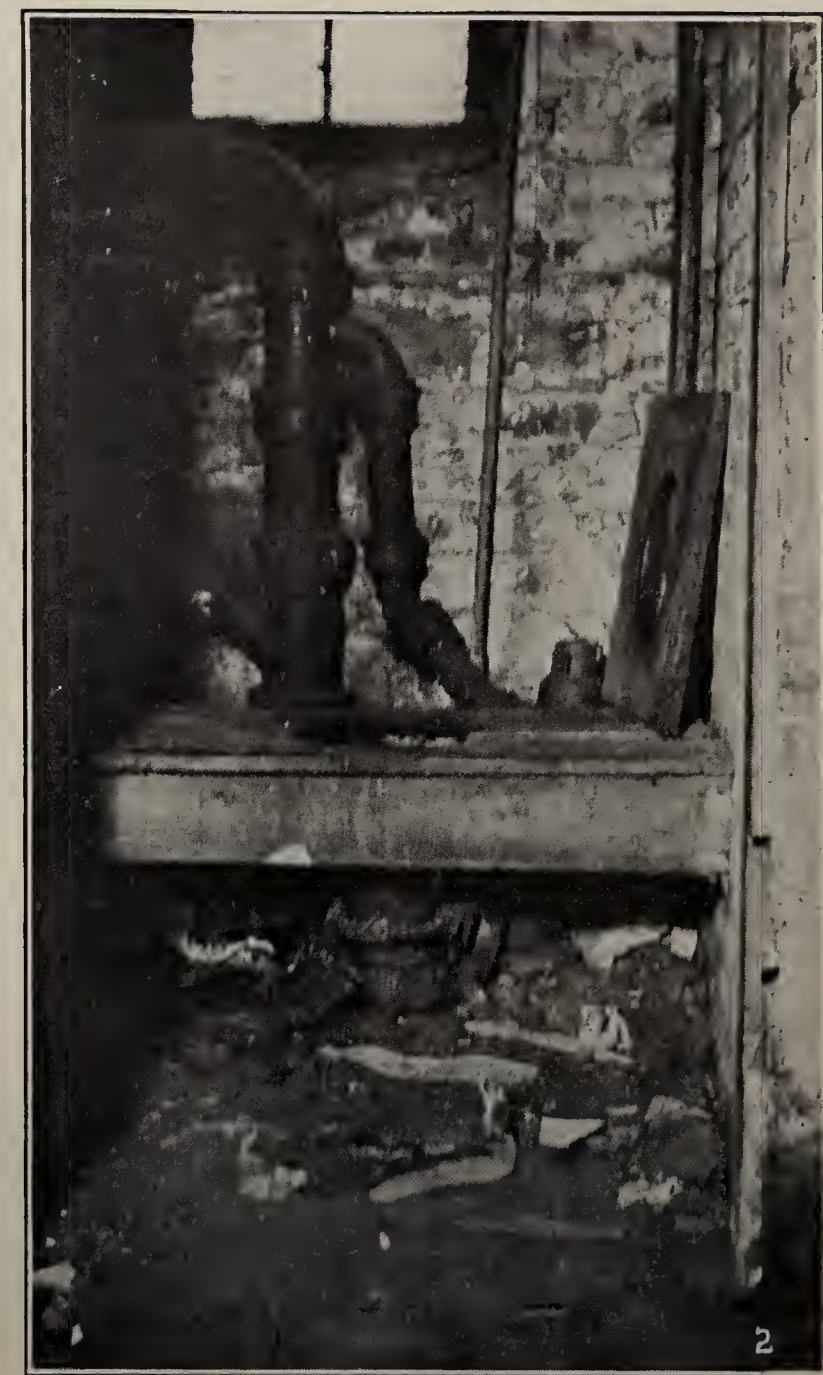


## TYPICAL WATER-CLOSETS.

1. Water-closet used by fourteen families.

(A corner of a sink in the same compartment is also shown,— a common location in the "converted" tenement house. In this particular instance it is the only one provided for five families.)

2. Cellar water-closet; unsanitary construction of framework and condition of floor. The opening in the former is too small and crudely cut, leaving a rough edge which is soggy and filthy; the latter is likewise soggy and filthy. WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS, KEEPING SUCH A TOILET CLEAN IS AN UTTER IMPOSSIBILITY.



## A WINTER CUSTOM, AND A METHOD OF REPAIRING WATER-CLOSETS THAT SHOULD BE PROHIBITED.

1. Water-closet off hall, used by two families and occupants of store (15+ persons).

Besides the ordinary accumulation of filth this shows the condition of the seat (under side), owing to the condition of the zinc that has been used to repair it. This zinc was once folded over the back edge of the seat and fastened on the upper side, the same distance from the edge as on this, but has since worn and corroded until there are dangerous, rough edges left, under which the filth lodges. BOSTON HAS MANY WATER-CLOSETS REPAIRED IN THIS UNWHOLESOME MANNER.

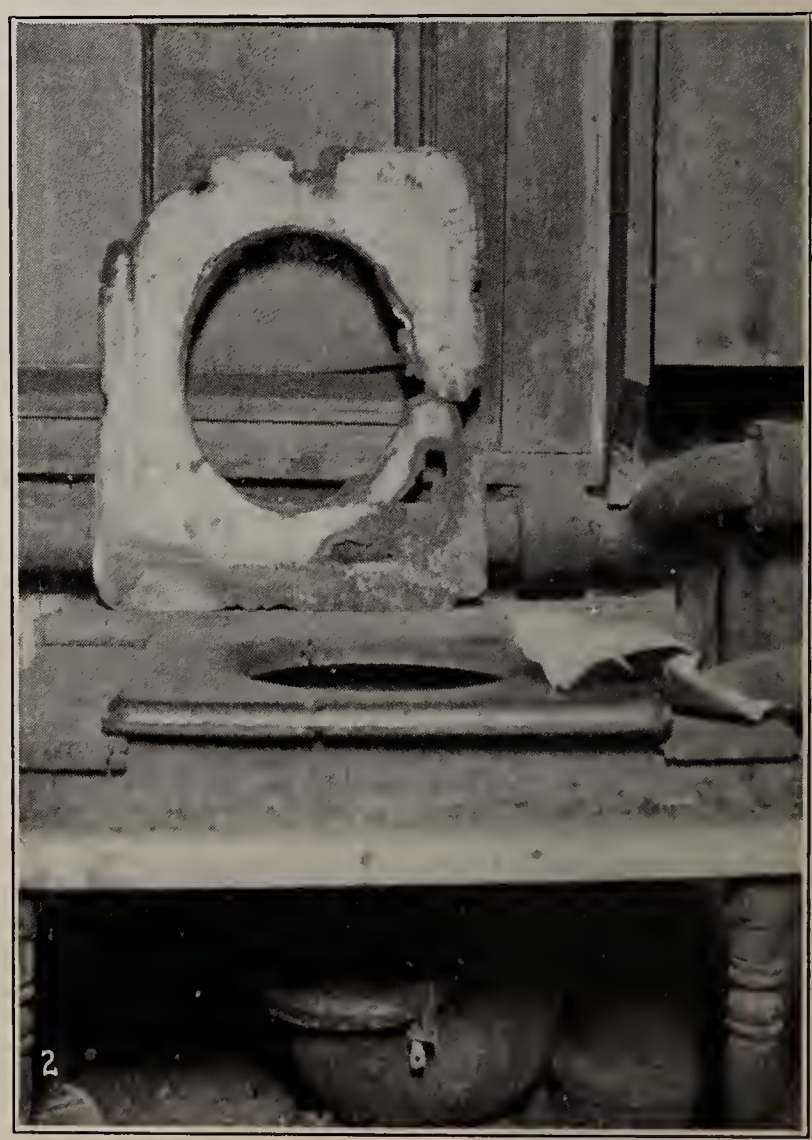
2. Water-closet window boarded up for the winter. (The light-colored square shows where the window is. The material used, in this instance, is a one-quarter-inch layer of plaster between two heavy layers of pasteboard. The wide boards below are pieces of boxes used to replace clapboards.) This method of saving plumbing bills not only makes the compartment dark, but directs the foul air into the halls. It is a very common practice.

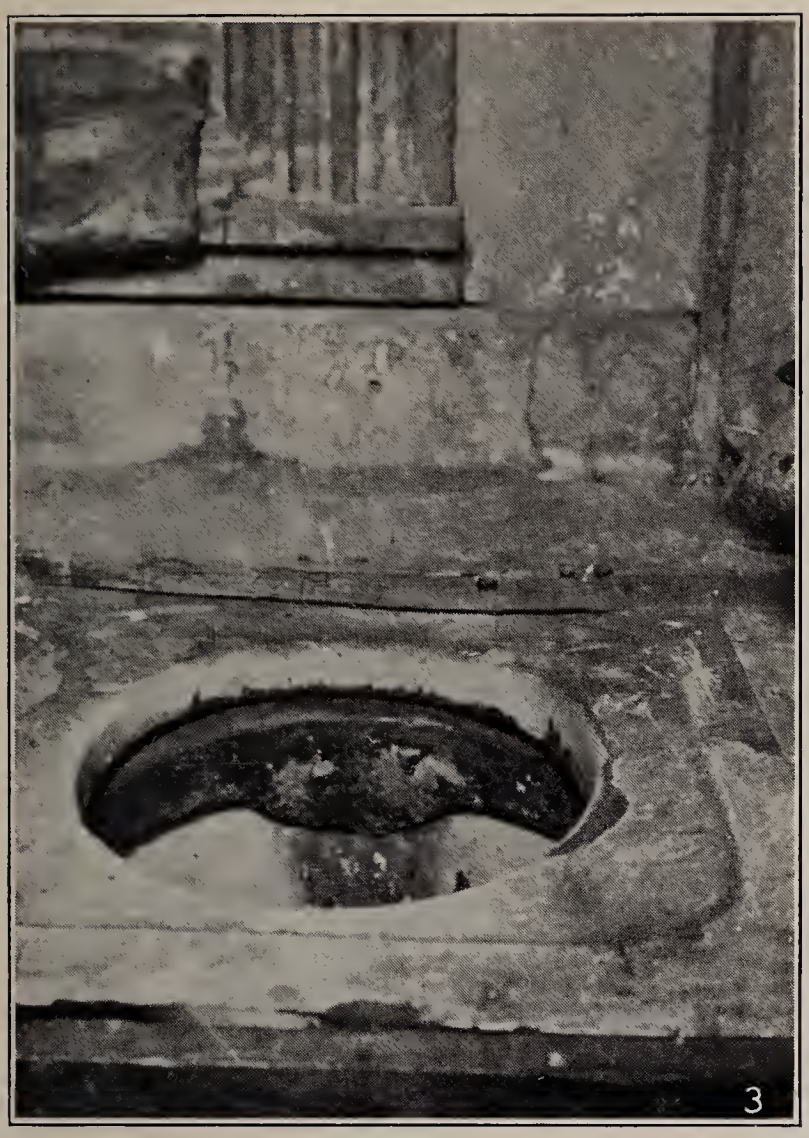
(The water-closet is the same one shown in above photograph.)

## THE ENAMELLED IRON SAFE.

1. An enamelled iron safe in place, and type of water-closet usually fitted with this diabolical invention. An enamelled iron safe is an attachment of sheet iron enamelled white. This is placed over the hopper between it and the seat, and the opening is supposed to fit that of the hopper. At best they are unsanitary, for even when new they soon become rusted and filth collects in the space between the safe and the hopper, as well as on top, between the safe and the seat. They soon corrode and rust, and the edges thereby become very rough, unsanitary, and dangerous. This particular one is comparatively new, but is beginning to corrode. Note also the soggy condition of the under side of the seat, which is caused by contact with the safe, that being always more or less wet and filthy.

2. An enamelled iron safe, removed, cleaned, and photographed so as to show the corroded edges. It does not need a very keen imagination to picture the unsanitary condition of a water-closet with this equipment adjusted, after a few weeks, or even days, of use by indifferent tenants, when we remember that it is impossible to keep a water-closet with a new enamelled iron safe in a sanitary condition.






3. An enamelled iron safe which does not fit the hopper and leaves a projection at back upon which excrement lodges.

4. This water-closet is equipped with what we call a home-made enamelled iron safe. The home-made enamelled iron safe is usually made out of zinc, galvanized iron, or sometimes even ordinary tin, nailed on the framework of the water-closet, and the inner edge bent over the edge of the opening, as shown in this photograph.

It is easy to see how filth can collect in this rough crevice and how impossible it is to keep the hopper or seat clean.

See opposite page.

has waged such vigorous war, that it is practically a thing of the past.

The 1907 law covering the lighting of water-closets in tenement houses at night, is worth quoting: "Every water-closet in any tenement house shall be provided with proper means of lighting at night." But — "If fixtures for gas or electricity are not provided in such compartment, then the door of such compartment shall be provided with translucent glass panels, or with a translucent glass transom." The deputy commissioner in charge of tenement house inspection, commenting upon this, says: "It will be readily appreciated that a translucent panel would be absolutely useless unless good light were provided in the hallways adjoining the water-closet compartments." To get the full value of the text, we must remember that light was not required in hallways until 1914, and then only in certain types of houses.

### Basement and Cellar Tenements

The Department of Housing made a special investigation of cellar and basement tenements in the North, South and West Ends, during the winter of 1913-14. Out of 1,600 or more, known to be occupied for living purposes, 300 were thoroughly covered, so that the conditions found in these were taken as

**CELLAR TENEMENT**

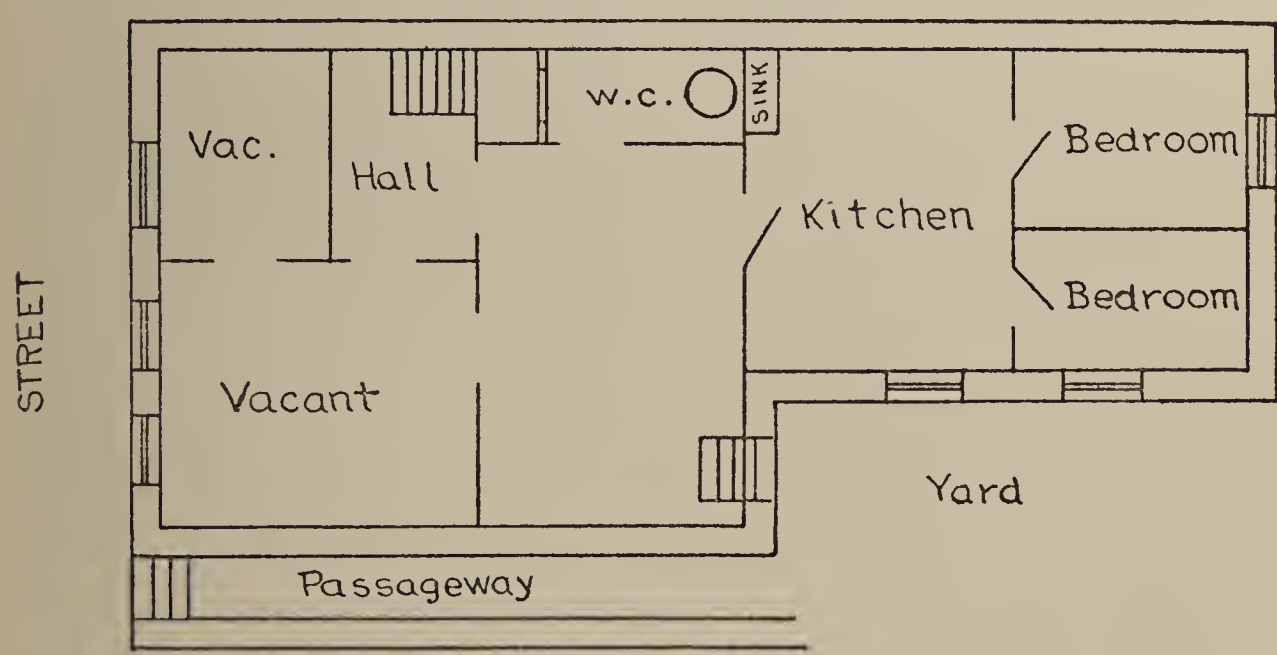



Diagram No. 7.

Diagram 7, see also page 36. A very clean, orderly, and ordinary looking apartment from a photographic point of view, but the two bedrooms shown in the rear, though recorded in the health department records as unfit for habitation on account of dampness, are nevertheless occupied. There are no outside clothes lines, so the tenants hang their clothes in the kitchen, which, of course, does not lessen the dampness of the tenement.

This cellar is reached by way of a passageway from the street and is divided into two tenements. At the time of this photograph a man and wife, four children and a crippled aunt lived in the three rooms which constitute the rear tenement. The rental was six dollars.

typical. These conditions were so deplorably bad that the committee decided to take immediate action to secure legislation for the regulation of this type of tenement. The bill as framed by the League, aimed to close unfit cellar and basement tenements for living purposes. In this the health department would not concur. After due deliberation a compromise was effected by changing the word " living " to " sleeping ". The bill eventually became a law, to take effect the following October.

The health department undertook the enforcement of this law with some timidity. It feared opposition. The opposition came even before the enforcement began. " What," cried one opponent, " turn hundreds of poor people out of the homes, such a winter as this! " Perish the thought! Rather let them continue to live in dark, damp, evil smelling cellars, if they will. "And, too, isn't the owner to be considerd?" We ask, has the poor man no equity in health? and is it to be reckoned of less value to him and to the community than another man's equity in an unfit building?

CELLAR TENEMENT

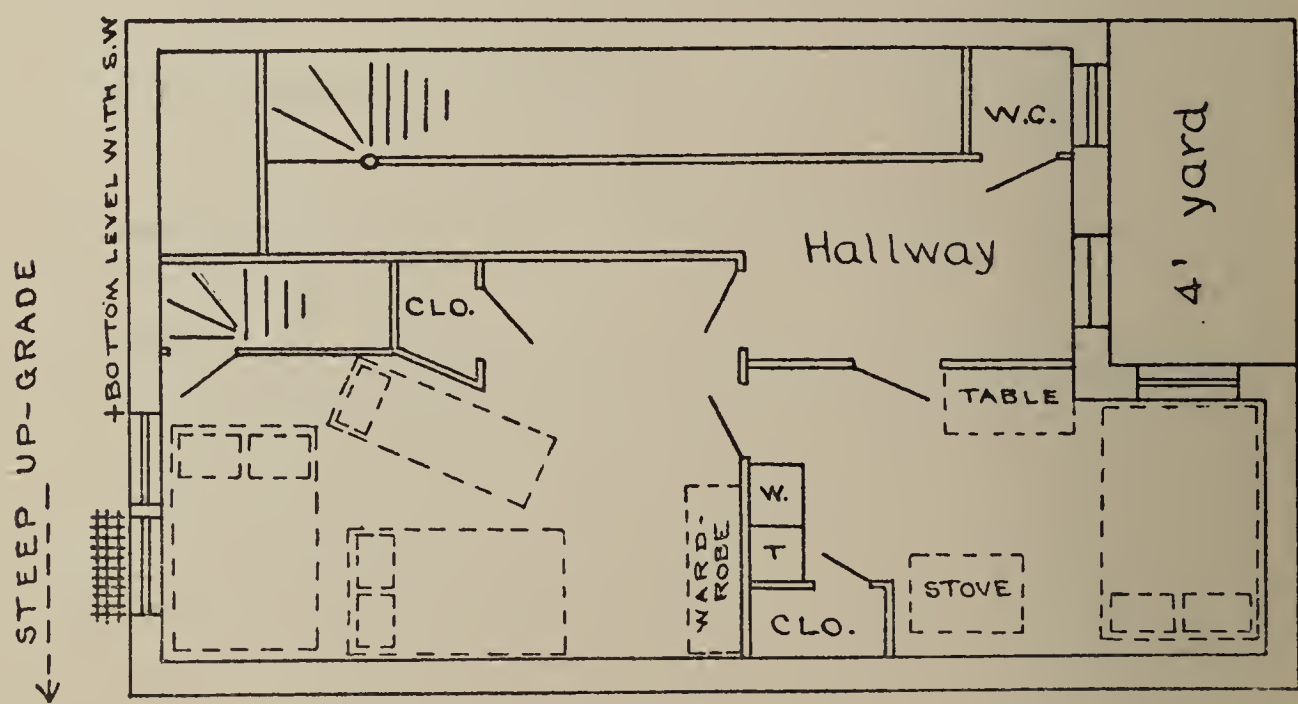



Diagram No. 8.

**Diagram 8, see also page 39.** Shows the narrow kitchen of a cellar tenement. The bed shows the width of the room; note that it fills the space at the end. A lamp is kept lighted all day, as the only suggestion of daylight which this room gets is from its one window in the far corner by the bed. This photograph, necessarily a flash light, was taken at 2:35 P. M., but even at high noon there was only a faint ray of light coming in this window which opens on a four-foot, excavated yard. The room never gets sunshine. The tenement (two rooms) rents for six or seven dollars.

The dotted lines in the diagram show the arrangement and the proportionate size of the furniture with the exception of a baby carriage and several chairs.

The family consisted of the father, mother, grandparents, and four children; one of the latter was unable to walk on account of rickets, and so sat day after day on a splint bottomed chair, an example of extraordinary patience — nothing to do — nothing to play with — and the only evidence of discomfort was expressed by continual sighing.

See opposite page.

See page 41.

There is no such thing as a **convenient** time for the enforcement of law, the only time is **now.** The winter is severe, there is unemployment and sickness in plenty; the summer is hot and still there is unemployment and sickness; the next winter is the same as the last; therefore, the only time to enforce the law is **now;** and the only policy fair to all is to treat all alike.

The health officers had no more than begun to enforce the basement law, than owners in the West End, where some of the worst types of such tenements are to be found in large numbers, gave voice to their opposition at a hearing before the mayor. As he gave them but slight satisfaction, they proceeded

**CELLAR TENEMENT**

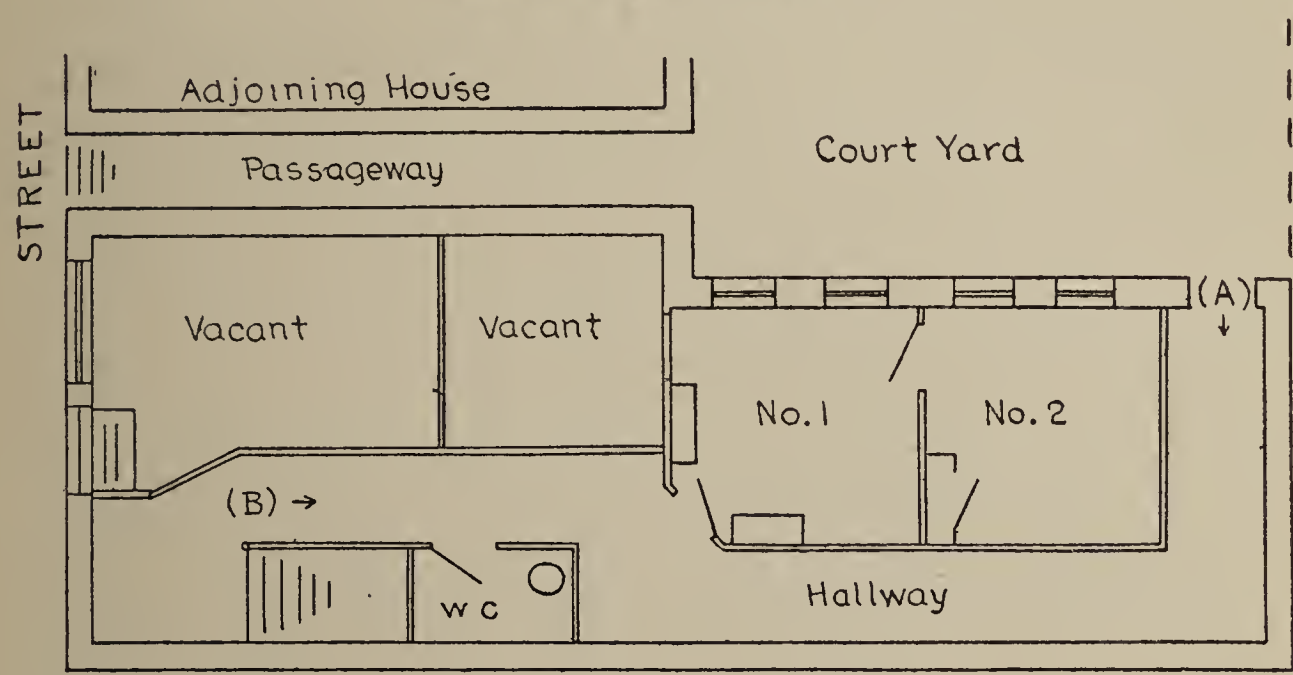



Diagram No. 9.

**Diagram 9, see also page 40.** Shows the rear part of a hallway of a cellar tenement, reached by means of a covered passageway. The picture (taken from point A in the diagram) shows the condition of the plaster, — the rot caused by dampness. In the inside of the tenement the condition is just the same, or worse, except that a wainscot has been built over some of the worst rotted places. This hallway is pitch dark (the photograph is a flash light), and on the day of the first inspection it was almost impossible for the inspector to make a way through on account of the rubbish and debris. The photograph shows it the day after it had been cleaned.

**Page 44,** shows another part of the same hallway (taken from point B in the diagram) and the door to the tenement. In the foul, unsanitary and out-of-repair water-closet — note the fallen ceiling plaster caused by leaking plumbing above — the wet floor and soggy seat, or portion of it, which is very common among these cellar water-closets, and also the location of the compartment close to the main entrance of the tenement. At the time of inspection this water-closet had been frozen three weeks. The tenants flushed it with hot water carried from the kitchen when the trouble was taken to flush it at all, which was not often. The probe seen in the hall is used to help dislodge the frozen contents of the hopper when so flushed. The inspector found it, just as the picture shows, in close proximity to the milk bottles. Imagine the danger to milk users, innocent of such gross carelessness, in the event of these bottles not being properly sterilized before refilling.

It is needless to say that, in view of the fact that being inaccessible, very dark, damp, and conditions generally bad, this tenement is a particularly obnoxious one.

to file amendments which, in spite of our efforts, passed the legislature. The law is now less mandatory and more discretionary, but a clause remains by which it is still possible for the authorities to accomplish much good. No basement room may be occupied for sleeping purposes without a written permit from the health department as a guarantee of fitness.

The fact that this law has met with such strong opposition from owners in the congested districts justifies its existence. In its enforcement, the department stands greatly in need of the support of an interested public. It is hard for the officials to stiffen their backs for renewed effort, when, in the face of the facts, defiant offenders, taken to court, are dismissed because of misinterpretation of the statute, or when, as frequently happens, cases are placed on file and become a dead letter. Here is a case in point: The health department entered prosecution against the owner of certain buildings in the West End, because of the occupancy of some cellar rooms in violation of Acts

BASEMENT TENEMENT

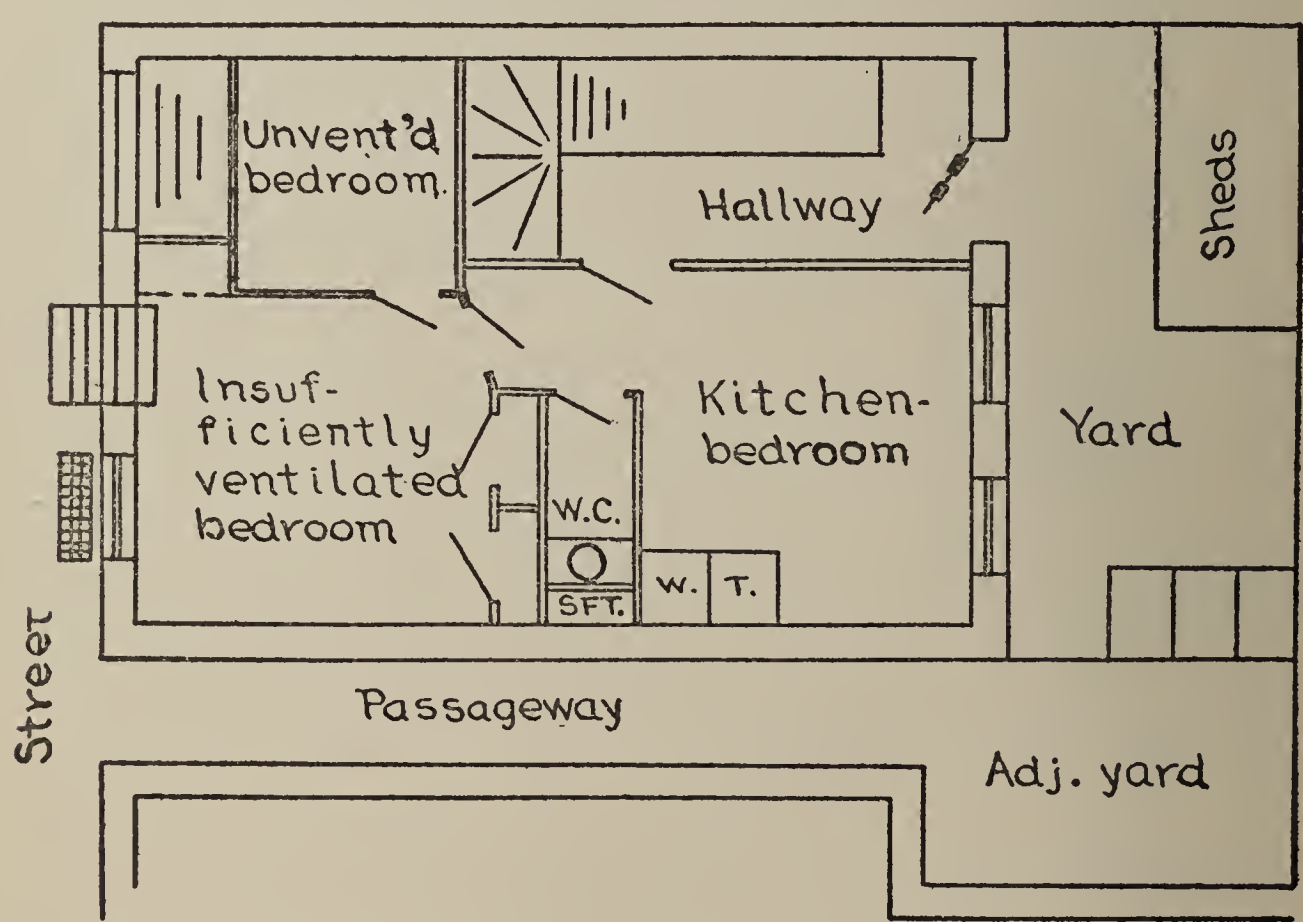
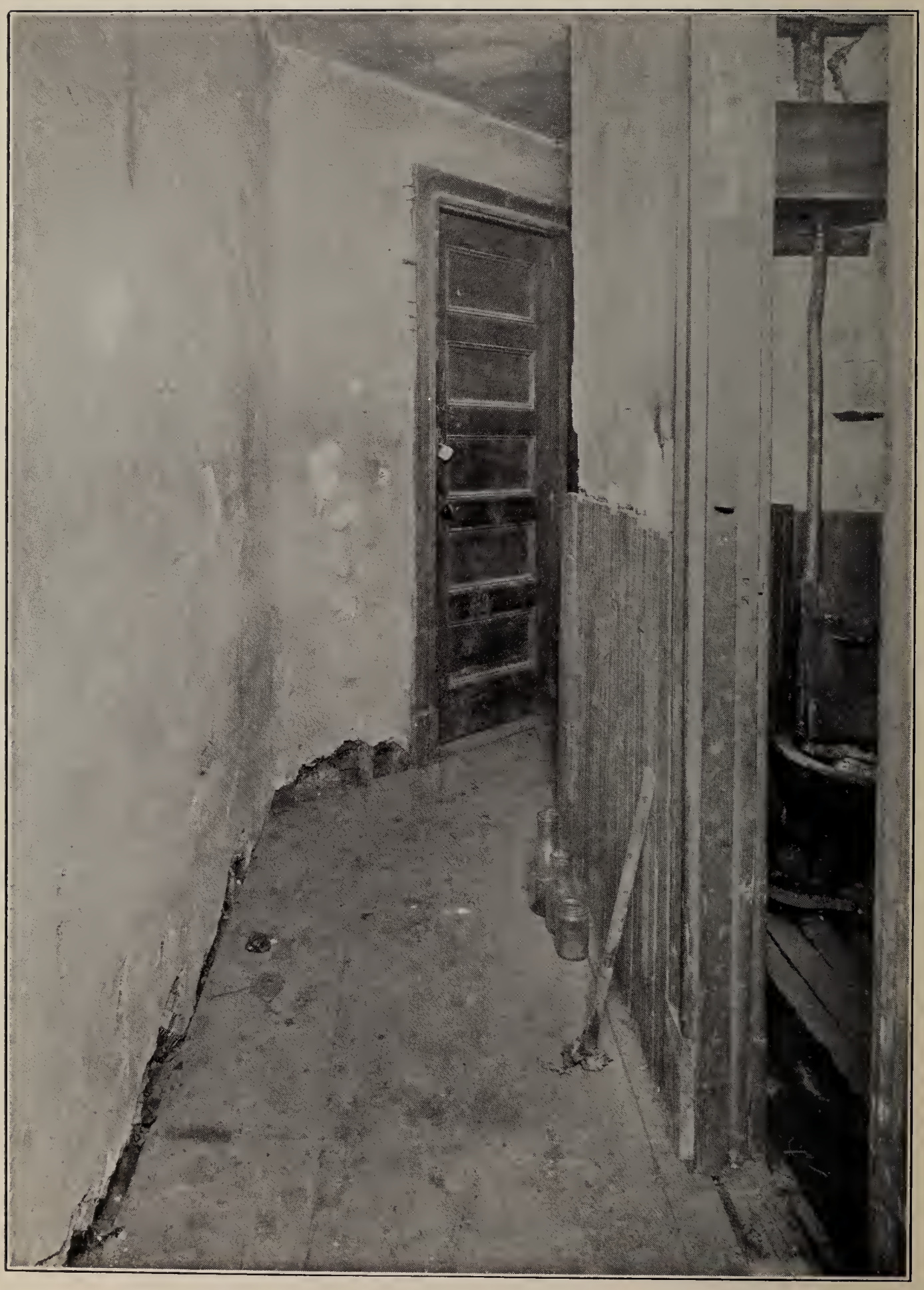



Diagram No. 10.

Diagram 10, see also page 43. A so-called room of a three-room tenement, but it is merely a large sized closet with slanting ceiling, located under the main entrance stairs of the building. Here, in a three-quarter bed, sleep the father and mother and a little child. The rest of the family sleep in the front room and the kitchen. This "room" has absolutely no light or ventilation. The little child who sleeps in this dungeon with her parents is getting a good start toward building up a constitution that will withstand future hardships, is she not?

See opposite page.



See page 41.

of 1915, chapter 346. It was pointed out that these rooms did not conform to the requirements in several particulars. The attorney for the owner raised the point that the buildings were situated on a private way or private street, and that the act did not apply to such property because of the phrase contained in the act, which reads "no room on any floor of any house or building now existing or hereafter erected, which floor is in whole or in part below the highest point of the curb of a **public street** or way in front * * * * * shall be occupied for sleeping purposes," etc.

The judge of the municipal court then handed down the opinion that the law did not apply to buildings abutting on private ways, and dismissed the case because the buildings involved did not abut on a public highway. The law department of the city and the health department officials disagree with the opinion of the court, contending that the act applies to all buildings, as it specifically states that "no room on any floor thereof (any house or building) which floor is in whole or in part below the highest point of the ground adjacent to such building and within fifteen feet thereof, shall be occupied for sleeping purposes", etc. This case has gone to a higher court; meanwhile, the rooms have been vacated by the health department under the provisions of the Revised Laws, Chap. 75, Sec. 71.

**We ask, if the health officials are not properly upheld in the courts, upon what can they depend for support when their authority is impugned? There is reason to believe that the dpartment is waxing more vigorous in the enforcement of the basement law. We hope, therefore, that that part of the public which knows the existing conditions will stand by and encourage the officials in every possible way.**

## The Lighting of Public Halls in Tenement Houses

As this subject is covered, up to a certain point, in the reprint of a Transcript article found elsewhere in the Bulletin, it is only necessary to take it up where the Transcript left off.

The League's housing committee considered the dark hall such a serious menace to life and limb, to morals, to safety of the home, and to decent living, that it determined to lay the situation before the mayor when the health board rescinded its ruling.

By the "Fire Hazard" law of 1914, the building department was given authority to require the lighting of halls in all houses more than three stories in height, and occupied by more

than eight families. The health department still has unlimited power over conditions in all tenement houses, i. e., buildings occupied by more than three families, and the League contends that compulsory lighting of public halls in all tenement houses is necessary to the safety (moral and physical) of the occupants. Is the danger less great to eight families living in a five-story house, to ten families living in a three-story house, to four families living in a five-story house, than in the type of house specified in the "Fire Hazard" law? We believe not.

Facts and photographs were laid before the mayor last summer; he listened with interest, then called the various heads of departments in to hear what they had to say. After considerable discussion, the mayor ordered the health officials to prepare and submit to him, by November, figures showing the existing conditions.

On October 8 the Boston Transcript stated that it had been decided by the health commissioner not to revive the regulation of a year ago, requiring the lighting of hallways in tenement houses. He believes that such a rule is of no benefit to the community. Protests from the owners of three-deckers in the suburban districts were strong, *the arguments being based on the fact that the buildings are remote from the congested districts where the prevalence of crime and immorality and the danger of fire is more pronounced.* The League's housing department considers that this statement justifies its position that blanket treatment is absolutely necessary in all tenement houses, and it entirely approves the so-called "individual treatment" for three-family houses, which are a negligible quantity in the congested districts. When one considers that in some six hundred houses in the North and West Ends, light was installed during the three months that the ruling was in force, and that those were a drop in the bucket, the "individual treatment" is shown up in its true light. It is a discouraging process, full of red tape, not willingly undertaken by the inspectors.

The health commissioner is a busy man, his time is most valuable; "individual treatment" implies inspection of the individual case by the commissioner, and the issuance of an order to cover it. Were there but one hundred dark halls in Boston, think of the amount of time the commissioner would consume in inspecting and applying "individual treatment"!

And the very fact that this method takes endless time is responsible for the present condition of affairs.

We would respectfully suggest that if the commissioner issued

a "blanket" order for the compulsory lighting of hallways in tenement houses, it would save much of his valuable time, improve living conditions in such houses, and at the same time do much to lessen the risk to human life and property.

Unfortunately, it is a fact that all operations ceased when the word was passed around that the order was to be reconsidered, and, in numerous instances, the gas was immediately shut off, so that much of the three months' work went for nothing.

Clippings from the daily papers show the possibilities of present conditions. "A woman recovered $2,500 damages for injuries caused by falling down a dark stairway in a tenement house, where her son lived." Another woman "was found, by a patrolman, in a dazed condition; she told him that she had been seized by a group of young men, while walking through a dark street, then dragged through a cellarway to a dark hall, and there assaulted and robbed."

"Two men were found at the bottom of an unlighted stairway, seriously injured; one died in the hospital, as a result; the other regained consciousness and was taken home."

In an account of a fire in a three-story tenement house in New York lately, in which thirteen persons lost their lives, the commissioner stated that a poorly lighted hall was the probable cause; a kerosene lamp had been used. There were fire escapes in plenty, but the occupants did not use them; instead, they rushed to the stairways.

**Such things appear almost daily in the papers, and none know better than the health officers of the cases of assault on children and young girls; the shootings which take place as a result of sheer fright; the constant misuse and abuse of the dark hallways in multiple houses.**

**Compulsory lighting of halls is a step necessary to the safety of the occupants of such houses. Our commissioner should reconsider his decision.**

## Dangerous Conditions — Fire Hazards

Among these may be mentioned the use of lamps, lanterns and candles to light hallways and water-closets. These are very carelessly placed, in fact, there is often no attempt made to fasten the shelf or bracket securely to the wall or woodwork. A shelf may be laid on two nails, or suspended from a nail by a piece of slim string, at each end — possibly at a sharp angle — and it is no unusual thing to find all the surrounding woodwork

badly charred. Again, lamps may be placed in the sharp curve of a stairway, close to the sheathing; a danger, not only to the house, but to the careless passerby.

In the average tenement house, tenants are not expected to use the cellar to any great extent; it is too far away. But whether they need it or not, they cannot always have it. The landlord may choose to turn it into a tenement with all modern conveniences, lacking only the essentials necessary to health; he may convert it into a bakery or store,— be that as it may, provision has to be made somewhere in the building for the storage of fuel, etc. The place chosen, most generally, is the hall closet, in the space under the stairs, and we find whole blocks of houses in the congested districts so arranged, sometimes with stout walls and wooden doors, at other times with the ordinary lath and plaster partition. These dark closets, full to overflowing with kindling wood, charcoal, paper, rags, and truck of all kinds, tucked away in totally dark halls, constitute a very real danger, as artificial light is always necessary when they are approached, and even though there may be a gas fixture in the hall, the gas is rarely lighted, matches serve the purpose. To add to the danger, in a certain type of house this storage closet is found near the light well between front and rear tenements. Should a fire start, it would quickly gain headway through this open space.

In several houses where the hall closets have had to be utilized for the extra toilets required by law, the ingenious owners have built fuel sheds on the roofs. In the makeshift tenement house, one gains many new ideas!

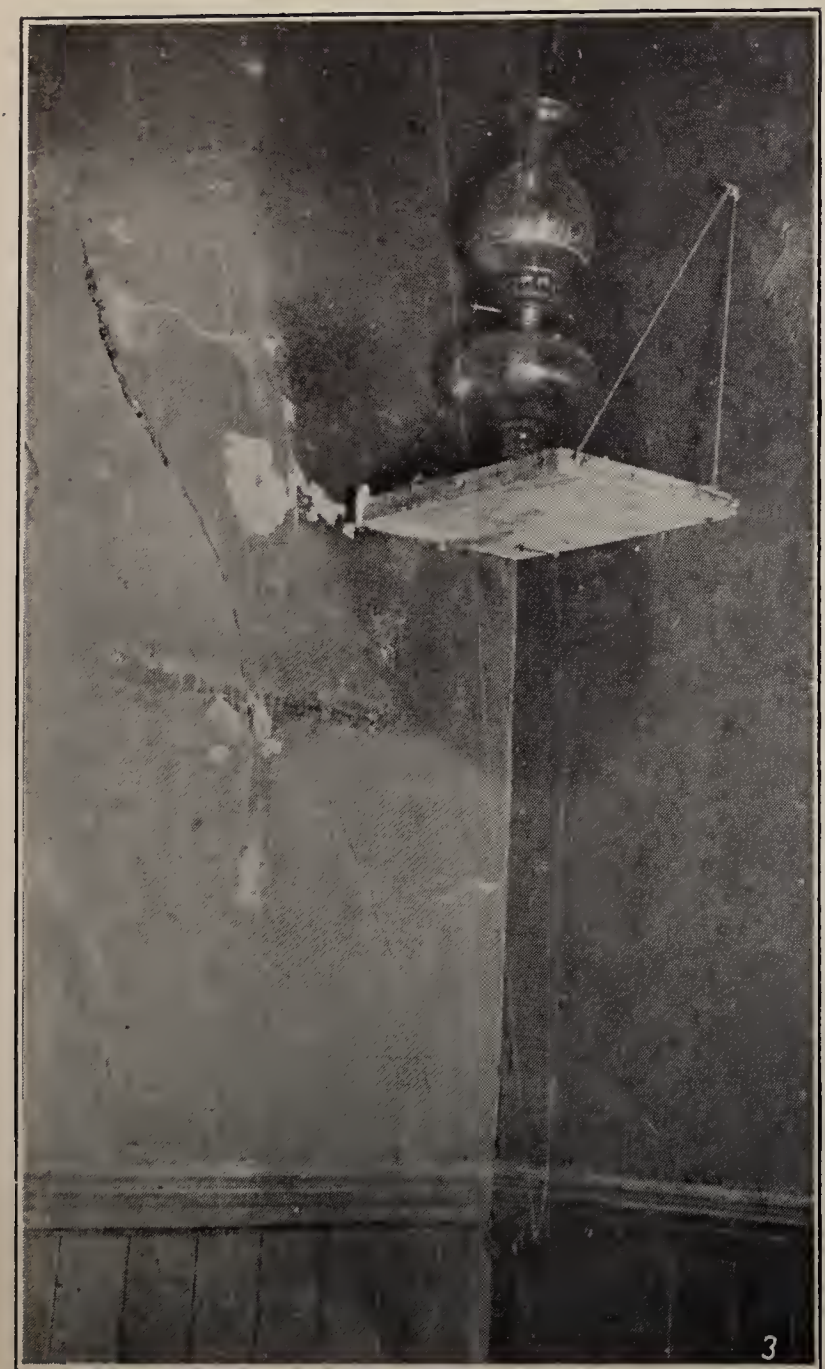
Another very common practice is that of sheathing in the space under the stairs in the main hall for the storage of garbage and ash barrels. Such a thing should never be allowed, not alone because it is dangerous, but because it is a nuisance also. In the summer the house is filled with the foul odor of garbage; the city men drag these refuse barrels through the halls, spilling the contents on the way, and there it is liable to remain indefinitely. Last summer, a barrel overflowing with straw bottle-coverings and excelsior was noticed in the hall of a twenty-two-family house, furnished with this convenience.

Storage closets under stairs have been the cause of more than one serious fire in our city. The framers of the 1914 Fire Hazard Law remembered this, evidently, when they included the clause which reads: "No closet of any kind shall be constructed under any stairway leading from the *cellar or basement to the first story.*"

## FIRE HAZARDS. DANGEROUS METHODS OF LIGHTING HALLWAYS.

1. This is a typical arrangement of the main entrance hall of many converted tenement houses. The closet is under the stairs and often shelters ash and garbage cans; behind them another stairway leads to the cellar; beyond this there is sometimes another closet, as is the case here, with more ash cans, etc. The dark stains on either side of the floor show where the hall has been misused, owing to its convenience and darkness, by outsiders stepping in from the street. IF THE LIGHTING OF HALLWAYS WERE COMPULSORY, THIS SORT OF NUISANCE WOULD BE LARGELY AVERTED.

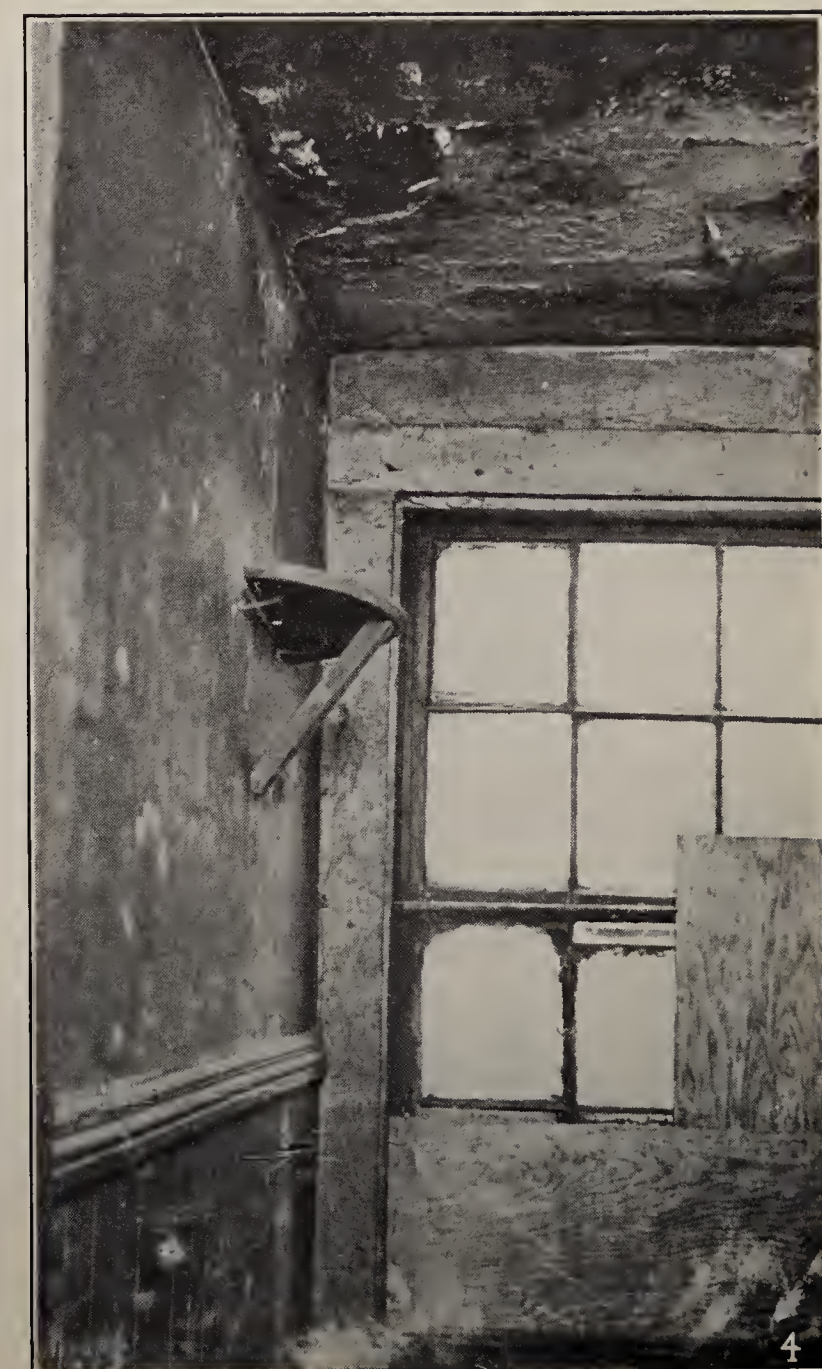
2. A hall lighted by a lantern.



3. Large, heavy glass lamp on loose shelf, merely hung by strings and steadied by two small nails—a dangerous condition at best—but note how much more so owing to the condition of the plaster which is bulging away from the laths, and it is very doubtful whether the nails are imbedded in the latter. The T-mark, at the left and a little below the shelf, shows where a bracket shelf was formerly fastened. The reason it is not there now is obvious.

4. Loose bracket lamp shelf and dilapidated ceiling, the latter caused by flame from lamp. The shelf is not only loose (the top part merely laid on two nails), but slants to such an extent that a lamp might slide off, from the jarring of the house, and this old house is tipped, creaky, and shaky throughout.

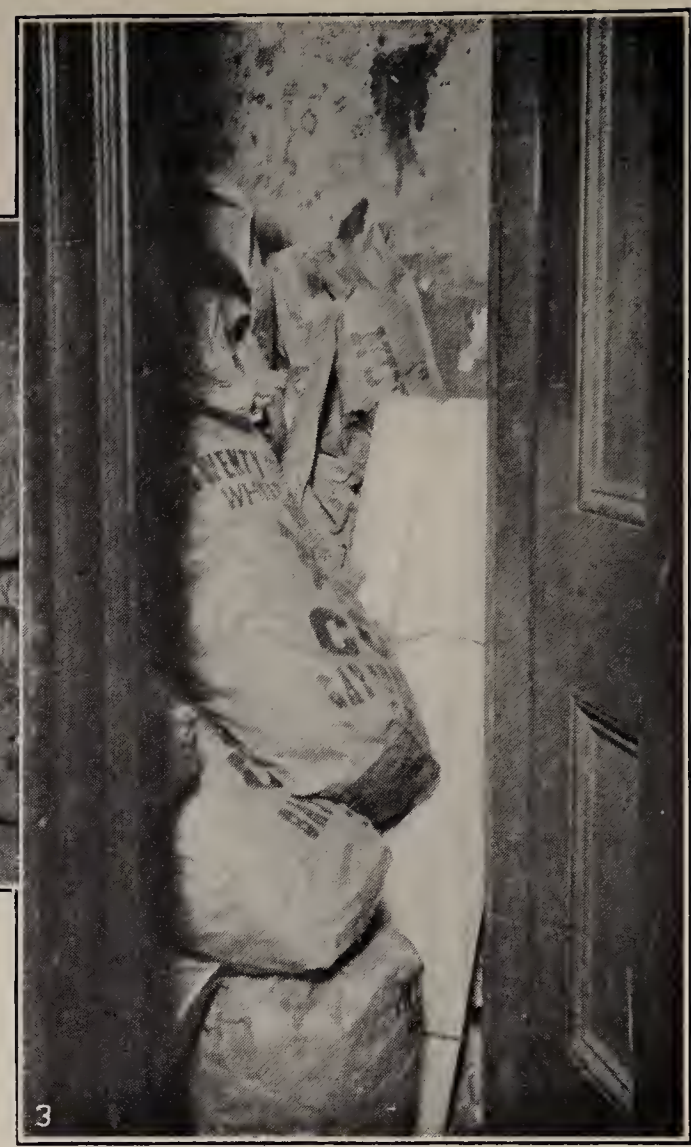
See also pages 60 and 61.



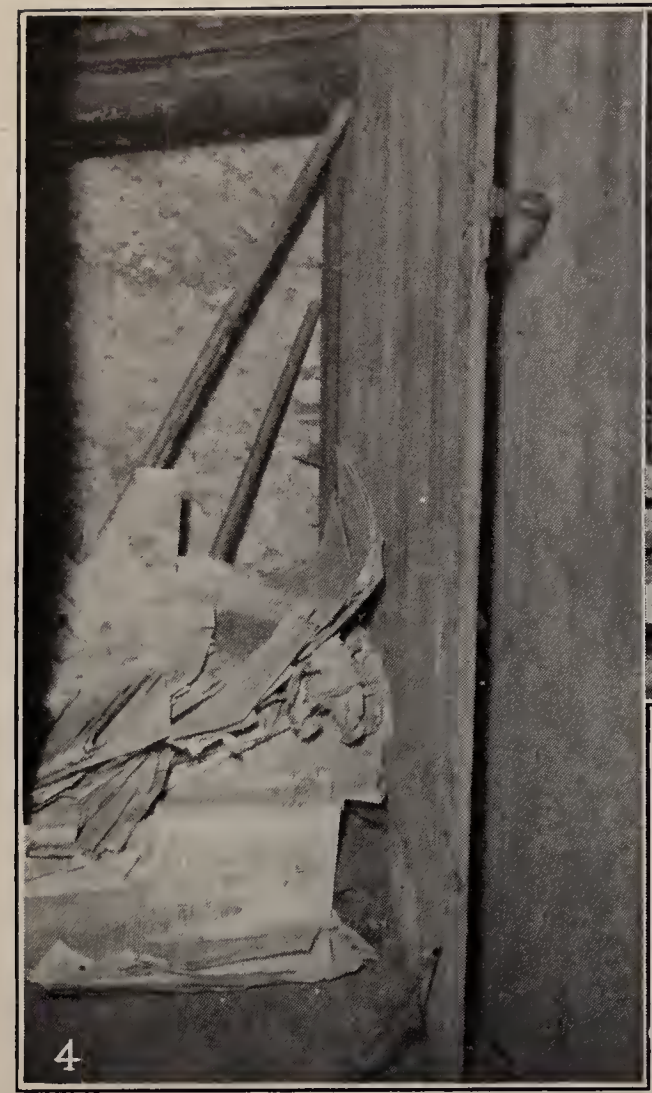
FIRE HAZARDS—THE ACCUMULATION OF RUBBISH, ETC.

1. A damp cellar twenty-nine feet long. Rubbish of years' accumulation, and much of it inflammable material.

2. Loose wall paper in hall, seven inches above and directly over the gas flame.



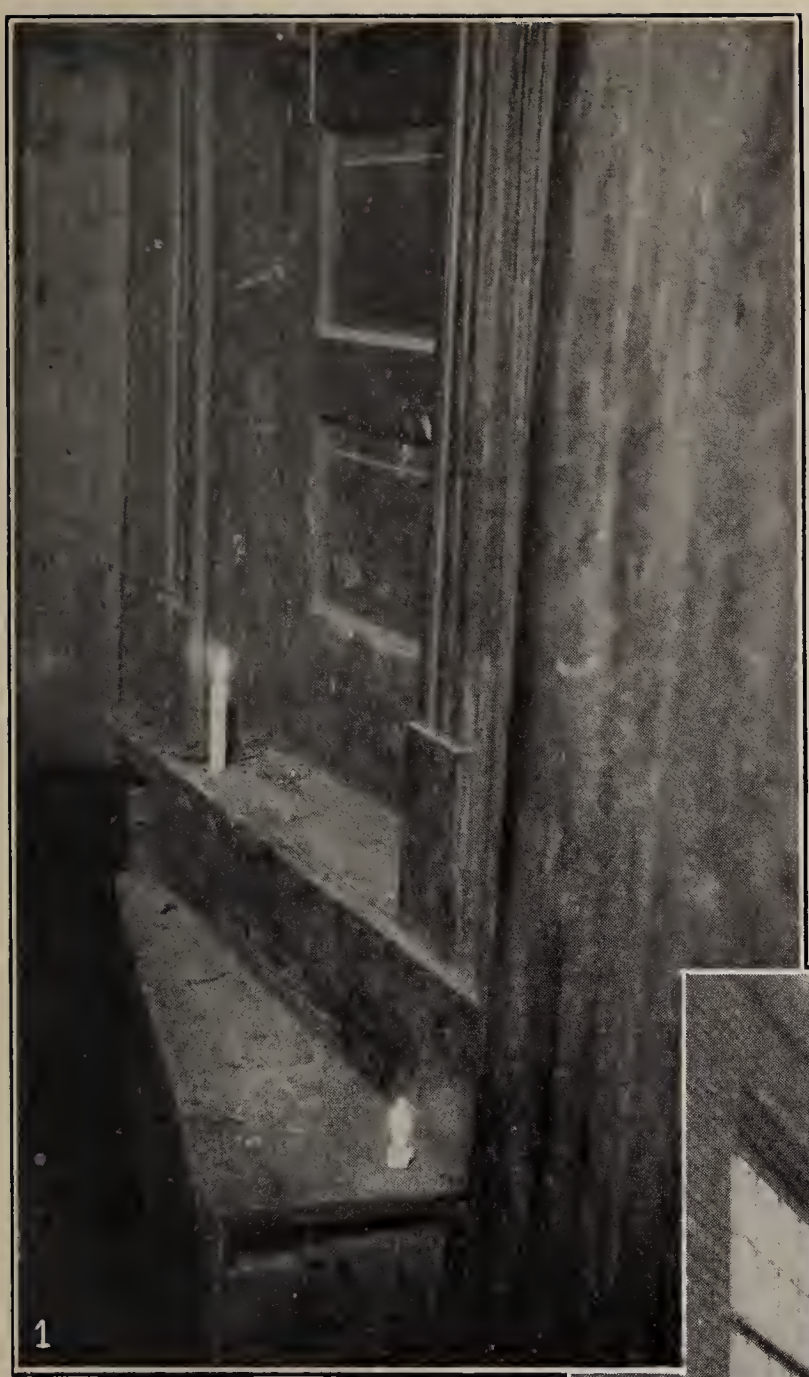
3. Second floor. Hall closet under stairs, used for storage of inflammable stuff.



4. Closet under cellar stairs, overflowing with loose newspapers and other inflammable rubbish.

5. The whole floor of this cellar, which is a large one, is completely covered, with the exception of a small portion leading from the stairs to the water-closet, and at about the depth of the rubbish shown in the photograph, with stuff of a similar character. There are great quantities of excelsior and papers in this rubbish. The house is a three-story frame, very old and dry, except the cellar, which is very damp.

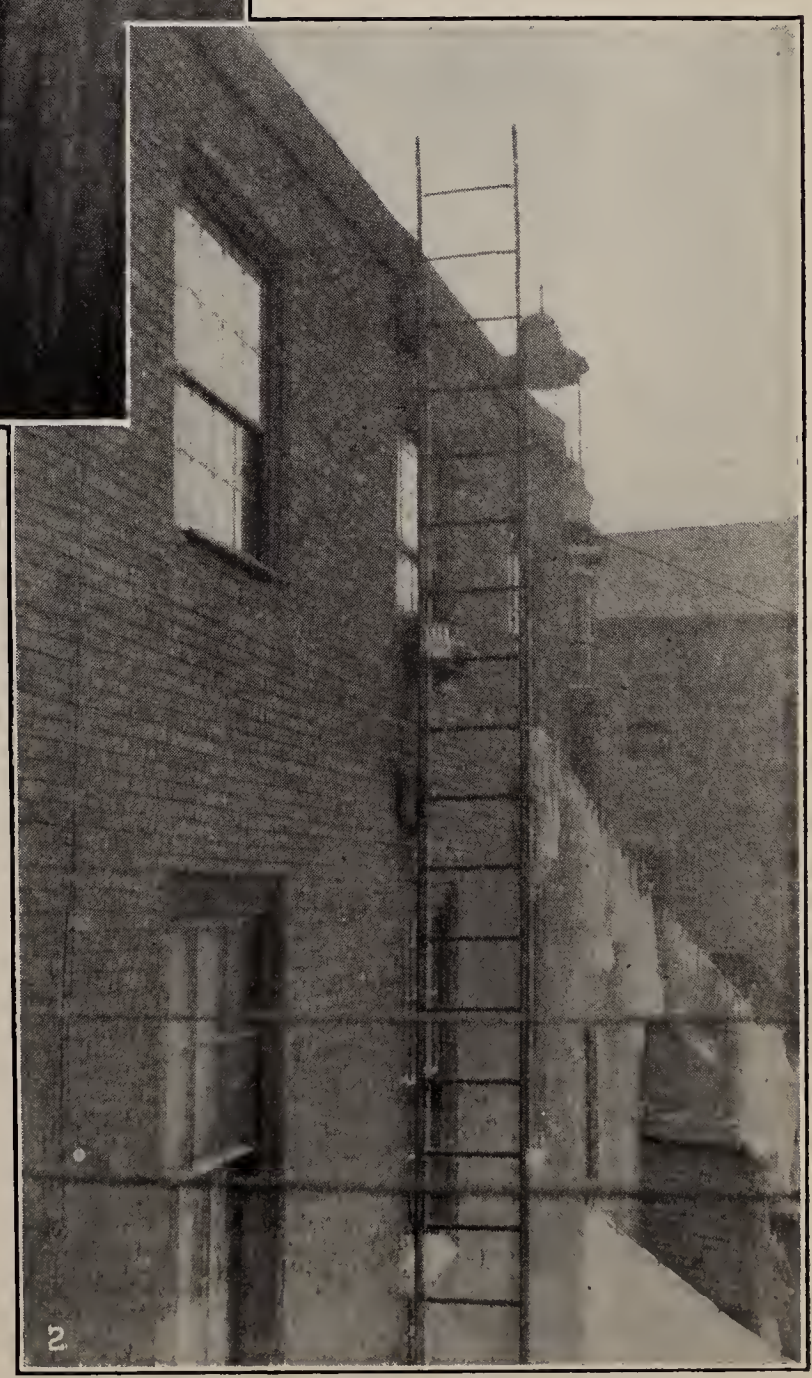
6. A corner of an attic. Many families contribute—but "nobody responsible."



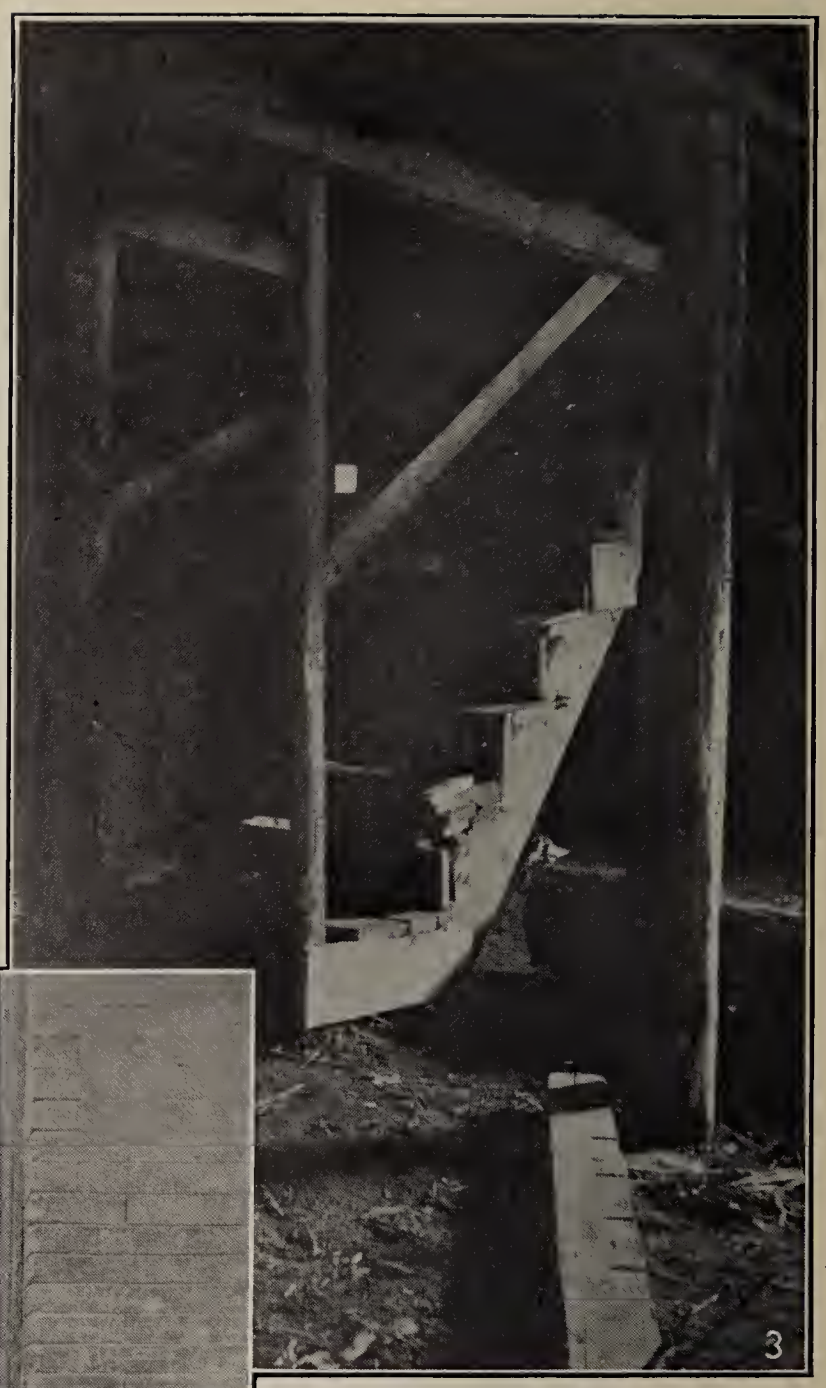
## CONDITIONS DANGEROUS TO LIFE AND LIMB.

1. A dangerous step which overhangs the subcellar stairs. (For detailed description see page 26.)

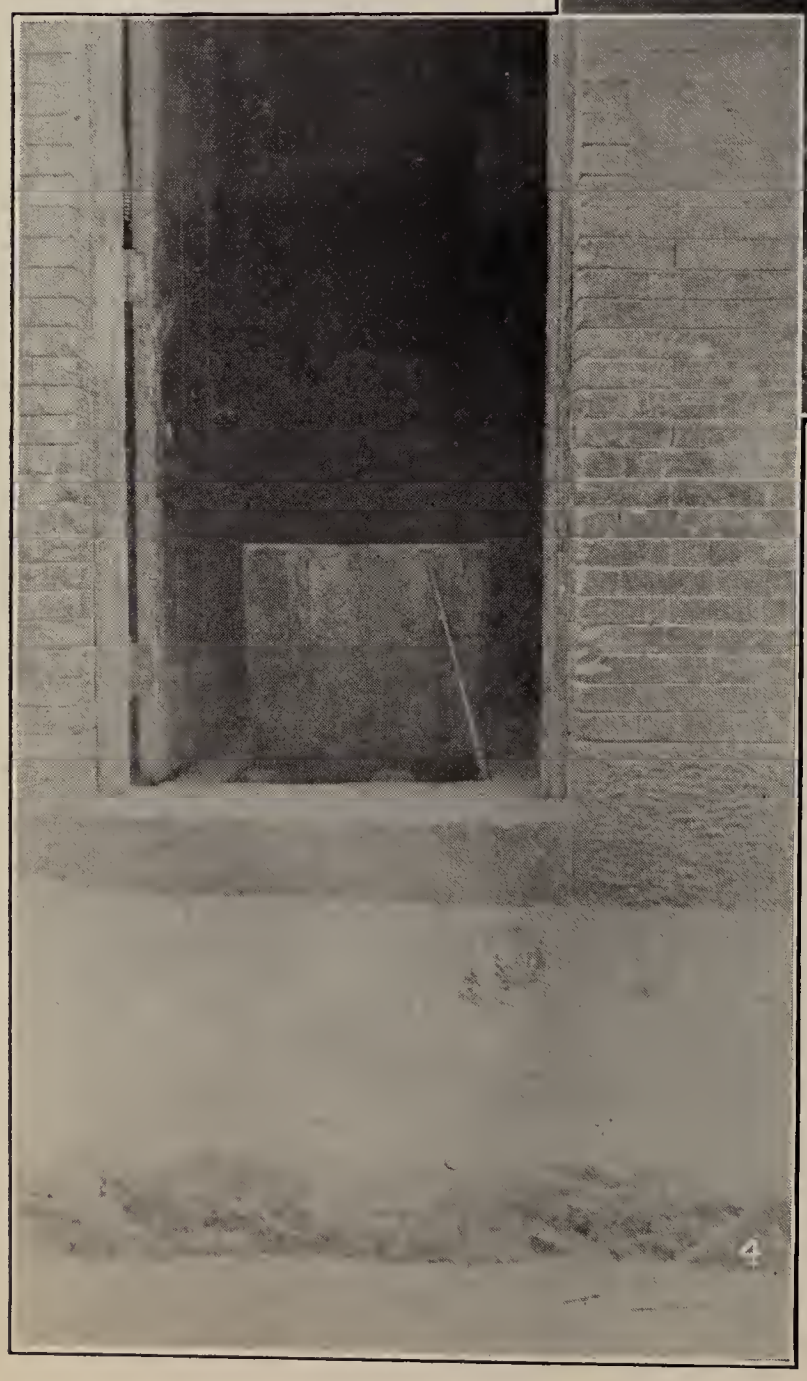
This is a very common construction of cellar stairs.



2. Ladder fire-escape. The window to ladder is 35 inches wide and opens but 22½ inches. The ladder is at right angles to the window, 17 inches wide (inside measurement), and is constructed of wooden side pieces with rounds of iron tubing.



3. Rickety, slanting cellar stairs. Crude and dangerous method of repairing worn or broken treads.



4. A portion of a doorway showing the extreme darkness of the hall and the dangerous trap door at the entrance. Photo taken at noon on a very sunny day.

This is another argument for the lighting of hallways.

The law should be more stringent still for the protection of occupants of tenement houses. Storage closets should not be permitted in public halls.

Another fire hazard, fortunately not common, but found here and there in the city and known to the authorities, is the use of matched boards for partitions and ceilings in cases where, to all appearances, the plastering had become old and rotten, beyond the point where patching would avail. This condition is found not alone in tenements, but also in hallways. We have in mind, particularly, an old ramshackle house near the North Station, occupied by, or arranged for the occupancy of nine families, one floor, consisting of many rooms, being used for a lodging house. Here the partitions between all the rooms on every floor are matched boards, and the ceilings likewise, except on the top floor. This condition was called to the attention of the authorities, and as a result the house is now decorated with a network of fire escapes, but the source of danger remains untouched. The wisdom of such treatment is open to question.

Other dangerous conditions are narrow fire escapes; ladders used for the purpose without balconies; obstructed fire escapes (this latter is a matter of education); narrow stairways (22 to 27 inches); unprotected roof approaches; roofs entirely without guards, used for drying clothes; all these deserve the attention of the departments responsible for their remedy.

## Lack of Conveniences, and Inconvenient Conveniences

Aside from the fact that there are dirty, untidy women to be found in every walk of life, to but one other cause can the amazing clutter noticed so frequently in tenement houses be explained, that is, lack of closet space.

In tenements renting for fourteen to eighteen dollars a month, the shallow kitchen closet may be the only such convenience in the apartment, and, in the judgment of the health inspector, it has been necessary in more than one instance to take away even that in order to bring about a more sanitary condition. With the best intentions in the world, how is it possible to prevent clutter under such conditions? The kitchen overflows into the hall, and in the bathroom or toilet compartment, coal, wood and vegetables may still be found in the bath tub (this hasn't yet become a myth in Boston, as they say it has in New York), and the sleeping rooms resemble nothing more than second-hand shops, with their four walls decorated from top to bottom with the clothing of the family and the lodgers, covered over with

curtains or newspapers. If, by chance, the walls are used for some other purpose, this necessitates the stringing of a clothes-line across the room for the accommodation of the occupants' wardrobes. The very sight of such crowded surroundings gives one a sense of suffocation.

Again, sinks are to be found in small dark closets in kitchens, far from natural light; it is impossible to keep such places clean, and they are very apt to be infected with vermin.

Sinks and water-closets sometimes share the same compartment, and are to be found in both the tenement and the public hall. This is unsanitary, inconvenient and indecent.

A case has been known where the owner cut off the water on the top floor of a group of houses, because it had a habit of freezing in the winter, even though the sinks were located in the kitchens. The tenants on this floor were obliged to obtain water at a small corner sink in the main hall, two flights down, and actually did their washing in that hall. The authorities ended this nuisance when the matter was called to their attention. While it is the only case of the kind in the files of the League, we daresay there are others in existence.

**It may as well be admitted that the essentials for even the most primitive housekeeping are given scant consideration, in the modeling or remodeling of what are commonly known as tenement houses, and there is no doubt that this fact is responsible for much dirt, clutter, and bad living conditions.**

## The Health Department as Educator

To the visitor in the homes of the congested districts there is probably no one thing more striking than the attitude of the people toward the health department. It is marvelous how seldom a word of criticism is heard except, of course, from property owners. There is no doubt that to the rank and file the health inspector personifies cleanliness in the home. Watch this woman rushing for a broom, the other poking dirty clothes out of sight under the bed, still another making a hasty visit to the garbage barrel, another running to apply an old broom handle to the obstructed toilet the instant the inspector appears on the scene. Indeed they don't need to understand his language; his very presence is suggestive; their faculties become suddenly awakened, action is the thing!

On the other hand the landlord's attitude is more often one of resentment or open rebellion. One often hears such statements as "That thing cost me fifteen dollars; the inspector said

LACK OF CONVENIENCES AND INCONVENIENT "CONVENIENCES."

1. A narrow corridor with a window to the outside in one end, and the main entrance stairs at the other. This corridor is the only place provided for the tenants, who number four families on this floor, for drying clothes. The plaster is broken as a result, and the walls are damp.

2. Lack of clothes closets compels the tenants to hang their clothes on the walls or upon lines stretched across the room.

3. A sink located in an absolutely dark, unventilated pantry. The only means of letting light into this corner would be by cutting a window in the wall, at the right of the lamp, through to the water-closet compartment, which has a small window to the outer air. This would be one mode of ventilation that we are already fighting against, as we frequently find this done.

4. Showing location of another sink in a pantry which, in turn, is in the darkest corner of the kitchen. The stove (a portion of which shows in the photograph) is directly in front of the door, which does not add to the comfort of the poor victim compelled to spend a large percentage of a day's time at the sink. As there are ten in the family, the dish-washing alone is not a matter of a moment's labor. This is a typical location for sinks in old tenement houses.

## A NOVEL SINK WASTE PIPE.

1. A waste pipe beneath the first floor kitchen sink to which has been loosely attached a section of galvanized iron rain-conductor pipe, which leads through what is left of the broken floor, to the cellar.

For further detail of this contrivance, see photograph below.

2. Cellar water-closet, showing drain contrivance from first floor sink emptying into hopper. (See photograph above.) This water-closet was the only one provided in a three-family house.

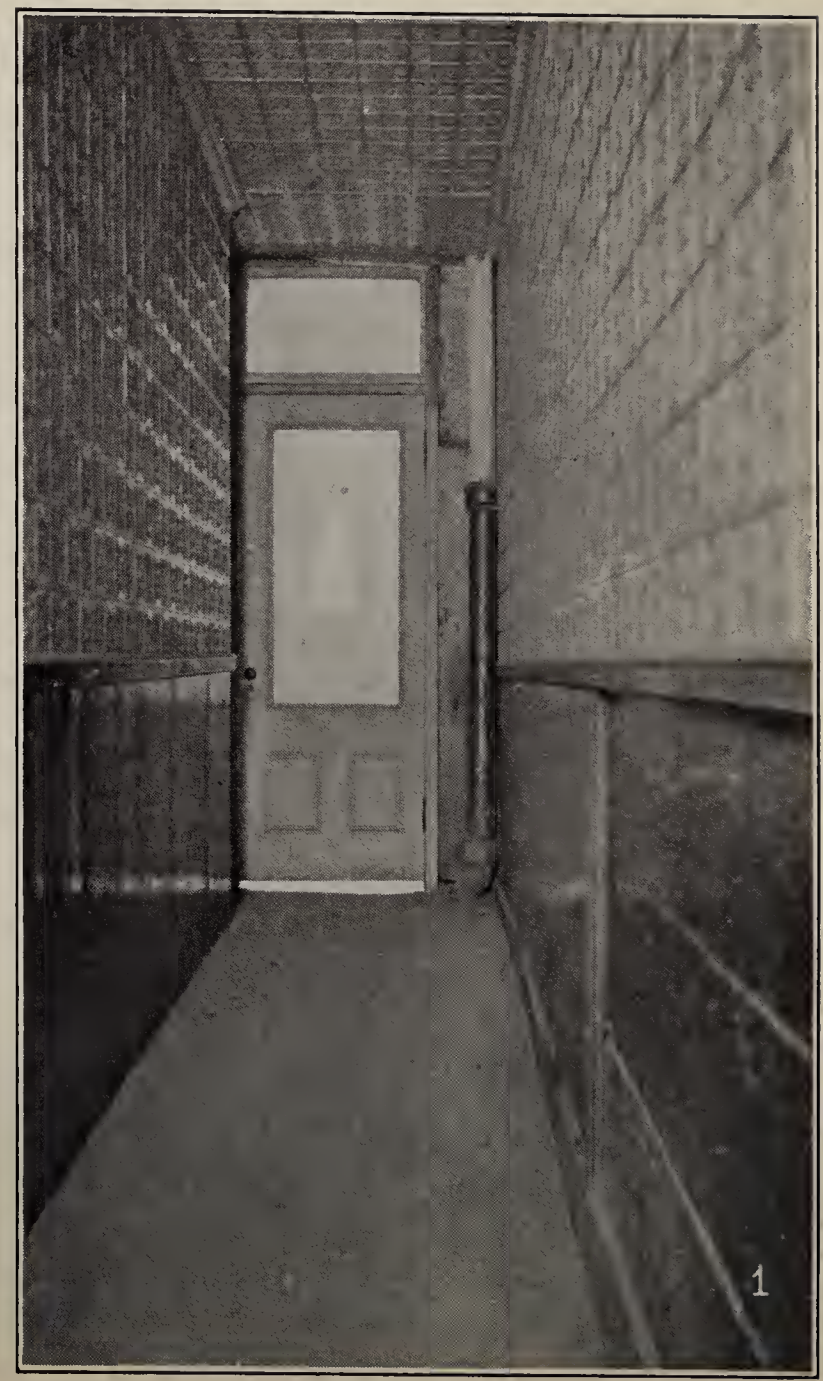
"THE OUTSIDE OF THE PLATTER."

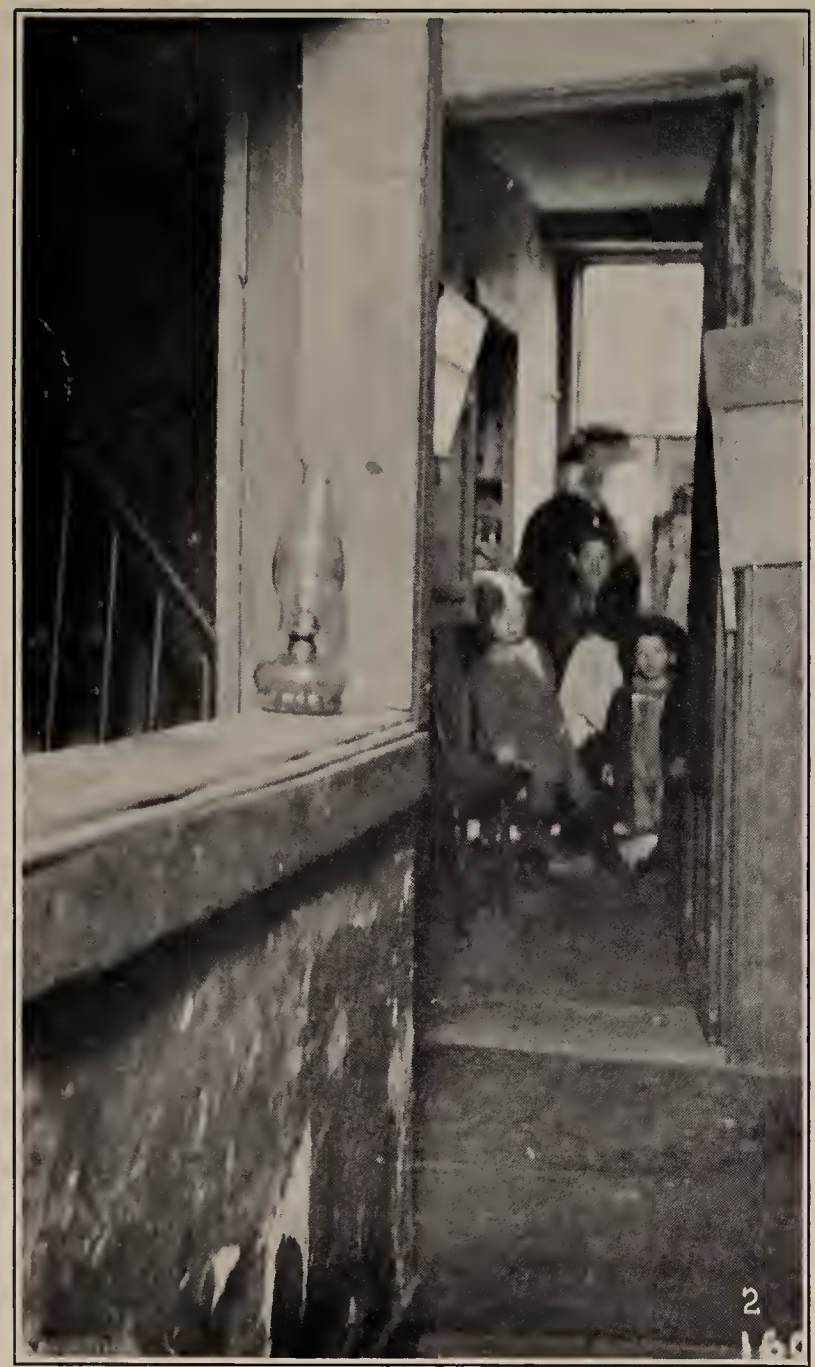
MATTHEW 23:25.—Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

LUKE 11:39.—. . . Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

1. Approach to tenements of a five-story house, seen from the street.

To the casual beholder this hall wears a "no-expense-has-been-spared" expression.






"THE OUTSIDE OF THE PLATTER" (*Continued*).

2. Second floor. Hall lamp on sill of opening in partition between hall and stairs from street floor. (These stairs are at left of opening, *below* the lamp.)

Dilapidation of plaster is also shown, contrasting sharply with the approach shown in photograph No. 1.

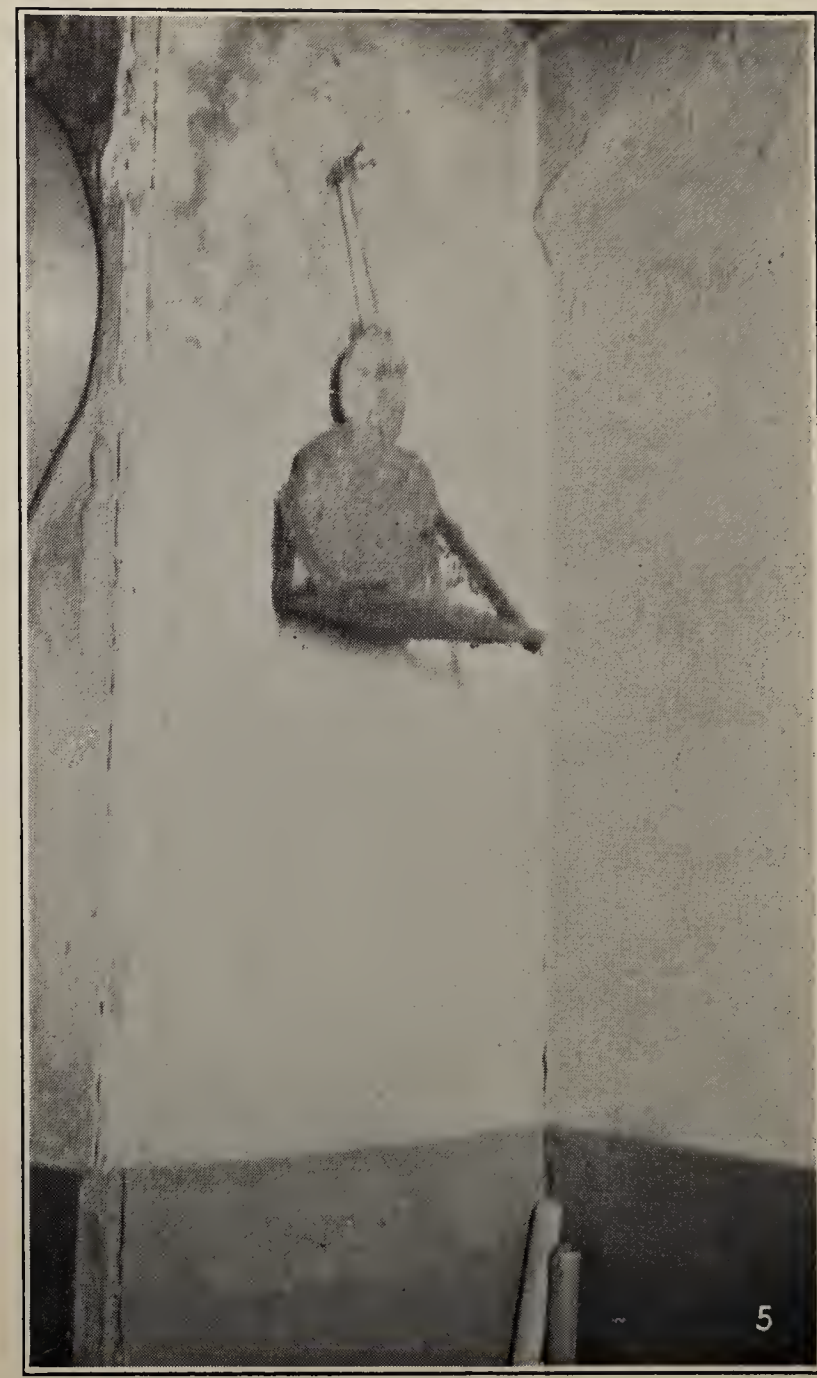
3. Third floor hall. Glass lamp on loose bracket shelf hung on nail.

The hall sink, used by two families, is also shown. Note the rotted woodwork, and also the dilapidation of the walls, door casing, etc.

"THE OUTSIDE OF THE PLATTER" (*Continued*).

4. Fourth floor hall. Tin lamp hung on nail. Also: dilapidated and stained ceiling, etc.

5. Fifth floor hall. Lamp shelf hung by string and nail; tilting both forward and to the side. Also: dilapidated and stained plaster.



it was all right, now here comes another and says it is all wrong"; or, "I have just spent one hundred dollars on fire escapes; now they want me to do something else! That's good enough for the tenants I have; d———d if I'll give them any better".

Another type: An unfit condition exists in a house; an order is issued for its removal. The owner pleads for time, as such a change will cost a considerable sum; the time is extended by the department — unfortunately a too common custom. At the expiration of six months or so the nuisance is still unabated and there is no evidence that a removal will be effected in the near future. Another order is issued. More pleadings, and so on. The owner has no good word for the health department. This should not be and the department alone is to blame.

There is no way in which the health department can better afford to spend some of its money than in some systematic scheme for the instruction of landlords and tenants, concerning their responsibilities as well as their rights, and what they ought to know for their protection, safety and health. A great deal of the annoyance to which the department, as well as the individual, is every day subjected, and half the failures of the department may be directly attributed to misunderstanding or total ignorance of its functions on the part of a large portion of our population.

It is the obvious duty of the commissioner to do all in his power to bring about proper relationships between the government and the governed, if he hopes to secure more permanent results. Boston is singularly behind other cities in this particular; to our disgrace, be it said. We are unaware of any efforts having been made at any time by the department to establish sympathetic co-operation between its officers and the landlords and tenants. Until some such effort is made, desirable conditions cannot be obtained.

It is true that the deputy commissioner, in charge of the inspection force, is ready and willing at all times to give his services at public gatherings of all kinds; but even if he lectured every night in the week, how totally inadequate this would be to meet the situation. That his efforts do not always meet with the approval of a certain type of citizen is, unfortunately, true. Not so long ago, workers in a certain district devoted two or three days to a conference on local conditions and how to improve them. Speakers from Boston and elsewhere attended, among them the

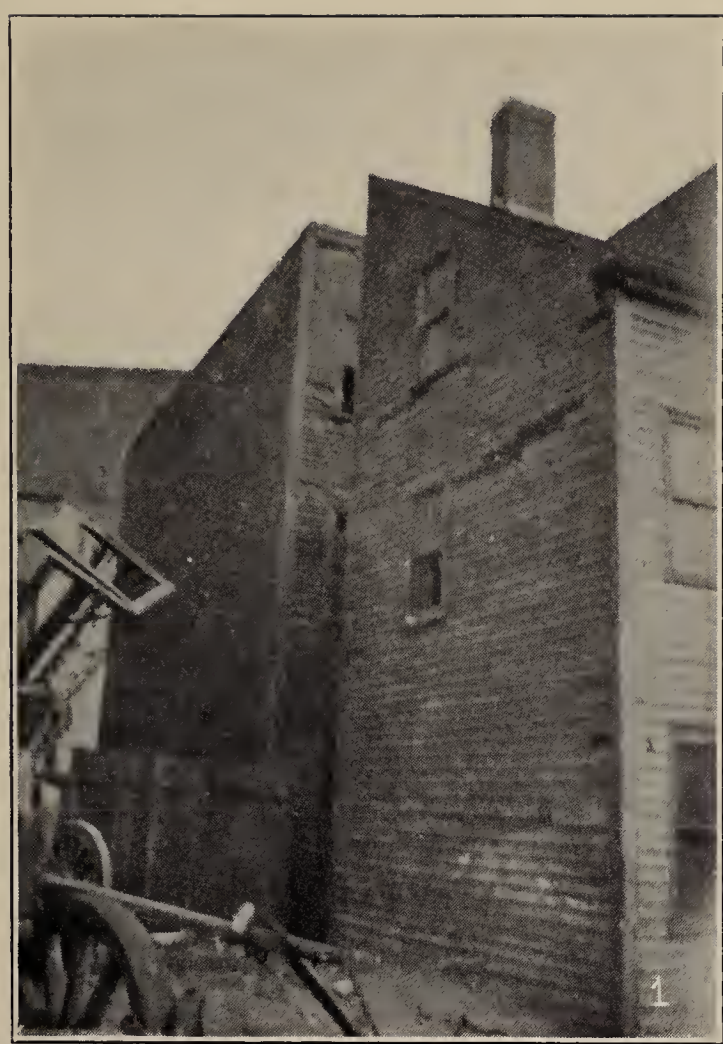
deputy commissioner referred to. He discussed conditions in that section of the city, telling what his department was attempting to accomplish, and suggesting ways by which those present might co-operate to bring about better results. At a meeting held not long afterward, the deputy commissioner was assailed by a respectable citizen for his temerity in exposing at a public gathering some of the numerous shortcomings of his city. He was declared to be an unfit public official, one who should be removed from office at the earliest possible moment.

It would be a pity if any citizen or group of citizens attempted to put a clamp on the all-too-slim educational efforts of the department to open the eyes of a very complacent public to the conditions which it is endeavoring to improve, but which it can best improve with the co-operation of an enlightened public.

In a city of the size and wealth of Boston, why should it be made necessary for a civic organization like The Women's Municipal League to prepare a leaflet informing the owners and occupants of tenement houses of their rights and duties under the law, or for such a corporation as The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company of New York to issue a similar leaflet for the information of its policyholders in the city of Boston? This is obviously the duty of the authorities, a logical first step in a constructive program.

Another point comes to mind.— When the health department is given new powers by the Legislature, affecting a large public from different angles, such as legislation affecting buildings and other property interests, such acts rarely take effect upon passage for fear of hardship. The interim might well be used to great advantage by the department in informing and preparing the general public for the enforcement which is to be undertaken at a given date. Such information could be given to the public at intervals, through the press, and also by printed notices circulated where most needed. The basement tenement law may be used as an illustration — the law was enacted in June, to take effect October 1. When winter arrived, the health department expressed reluctance to enforce it to any extent that year because it might entail undue hardship to the hundreds of families occupying such places. It will be seen that the summer months went for nothing, whereas if proper publicity had been given to the new law, and owners and occupants duly informed, there would have been ample time for all to make ready, and the question of hardship would have been eliminated.

In cities like Chicago and New York, the health and tenement house departments have spent and are spending time and



## DILAPIDATION.

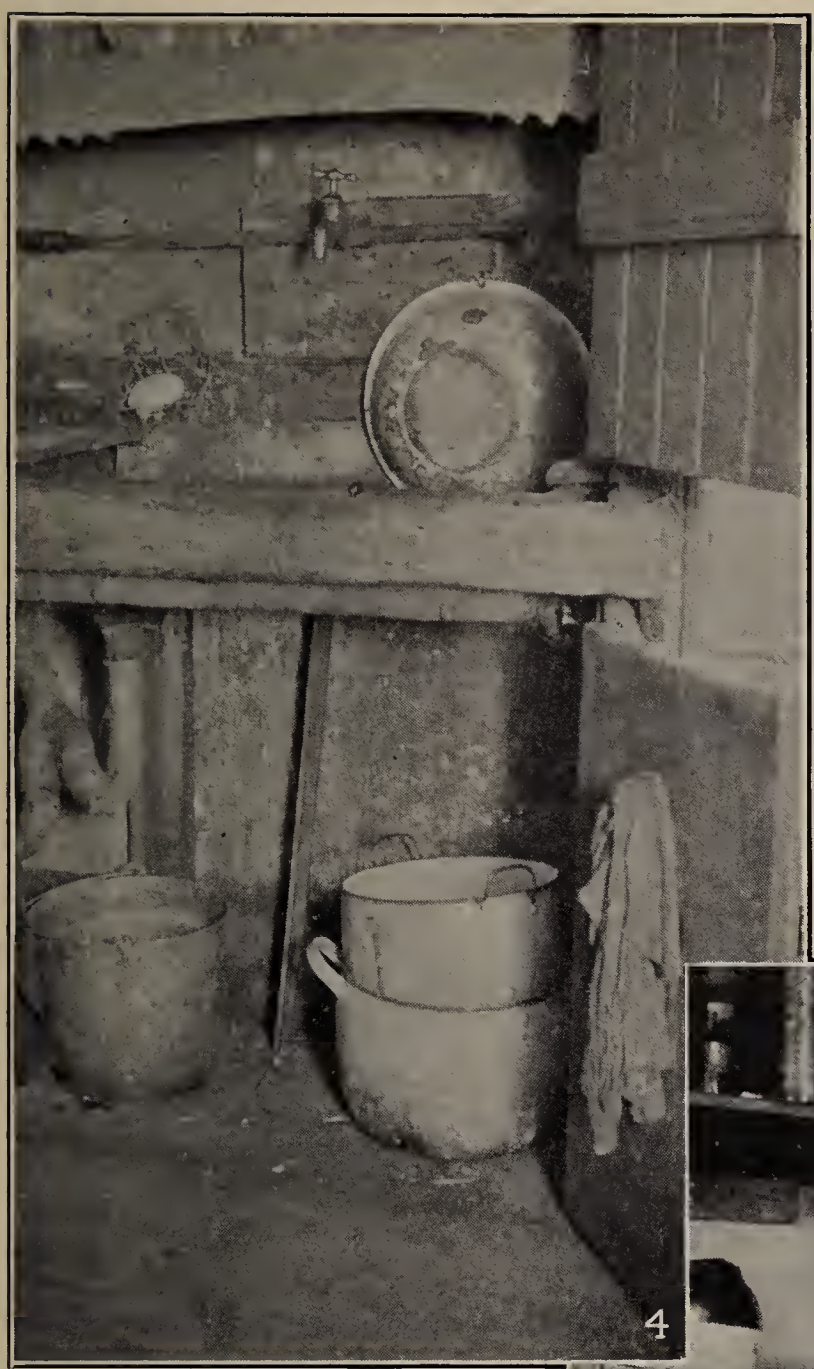
1. Dilapidated buildings, both occupied and unoccupied, are numerous in Charlestown, South Boston, the South End, and Roxbury.

Besides being most unsightly, dilapidated deserted buildings are a great detriment to any neighborhood, and often prove a positive nuisance, through misuse.

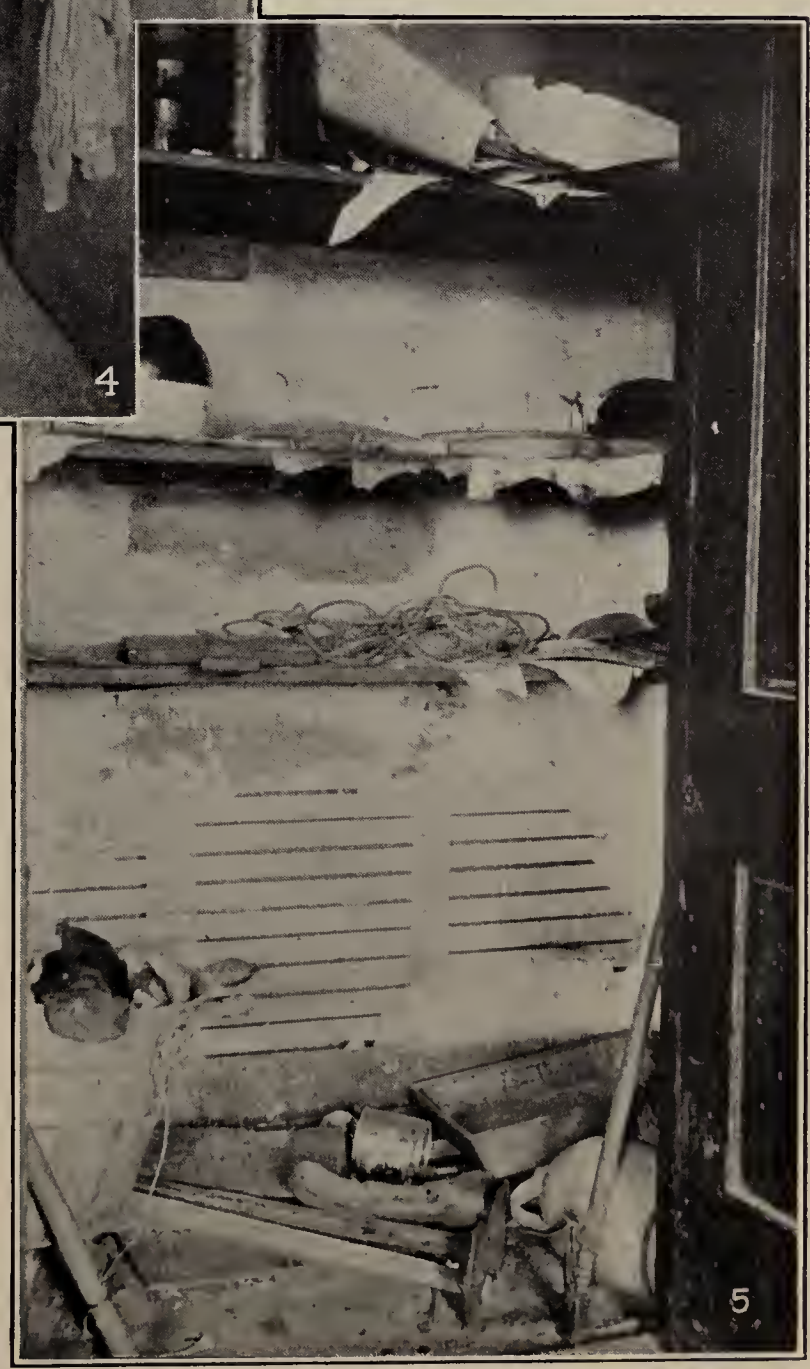
The Building Commissioner reported lately that 1,200 dilapidated buildings had been razed in the city during the past two years. This is well. We have no doubt that there are at least that many more remaining—buildings such as the above—which should be razed by order of the Building or Health Department because of unsafe or unfit conditions.

2. A dangerous state of dilapidation which menaces several children whose bed is beneath this ceiling.

3. Dilapidation and rat holes beneath a bedroom window. The house thruout is in a similar condition.



4. Sink held up by the prop seen in the centre of the picture.



5. Dilapidation in pantry. This photograph also gives some idea of the size of these so-called pantries, which are found in the average tenement. The width is a little more than that of the door, and the depth is equal to that of the shelves, and one such closet in each tenement is the only place provided for the dishes, coal, wood, etc., even when used for legitimate purposes.

VERMIN INFESTED TENEMENTS.

1. A picture of a little shelf that hangs on the door casing of a bedroom, which, by the way, is an inner one, having no outside ventilation. The backboard of the shelf harbors a colony of cockroaches, a few of them being shown in the photograph, though most of them scampered away when the light was removed. This whole house is similarly infested with these pests.

2. Another colony of cockroaches in a kitchen.

There is no pantry or dish-closet in this house, so the kitchen utensils are hung on the walls, and the dishes kept on open shelves built in any available corner; in this instance, beside the chimney. The colander is hung on the chimney itself. The ceiling of this kitchen is but 6′ 6″ high, so the colander is easily reached, though the nail is but a few inches from the sagged, rough, and blackened ceiling. The bulge and roughness of the chimney also testify to an ancient, dilapidated shelter for innumerable members of the genus man, as well as that of cockroaches.

money, informing the masses of the laws on the statute books for their protection.

In Chicago, under one health commissioner, a great deal of publicity was given to such things through the street cars as well as through the schools, and bulletins were issued for general distribution giving the people information of direct interest to them,— the value of light and air, of cleanliness, etc.

The 1915 report of the New York Tenement House Commission states that a campaign for the instruction of tenement house dwellers was inaugurated in 1914. It was begun with the issuance of a pamphlet which tells in one-syllable words and attractive pictures things which people who live in tenement houses need to know; the difference between bad housing and bad housekeeping (how often a tenant is heard to remark that a house is "no good" because the doors of her apartment are filthy, and she refuses to wash them!); the danger of living in dark rooms, and rooms having poor ventilation; how essential sunlight and cleanliness are to health; where the tenant's rights end, and the landlord's begin; information about fire danger, fire escapes, dangerous conditions; also where to go in order to have a wrong made right; all these things are told simply and clearly.

Such a pamphlet is bound to prove of inestimable value to the tenement house department,— the housekeeper of the city.

Commenting on the pamphlet the *Brooklyn Eagle* says, "Landlords who make a business of exploiting poverty and ignorance for profit may well object to the city's going into this sort of business. But the taxpayers should be on the other side; the sickness, caused by dark rooms and foul living conditions, becomes a burden upon their public or private charity, and the city government which seeks to prevent it is taking a step toward reduced taxation."

The foregoing suggestions merit the consideration of Boston's Health Commissioner.

M. E. Clarke,
Theodora Bailey,
*Inspectors, Housing Department.*

# THROUGH THE AUGEAN STABLES OF BOSTON

(Reprint from *Boston Evening Transcript,* Wednesday, November 10, 1915)

CONDITIONS OF ALMOST UNBELIEVABLE FILTH, SCATTERED ALL OVER THE CITY, NOW FIRST ATTACKED BY THE WOMEN'S MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

BY F. W. COBURN.

Not a pleasant story is this, about the records of the housing department of the Women's Municipal League, to be displayed at the State House as part of the city planning exposition opening the latter part of this week. It had best not be read by those who care for Boston only to sentimentalize over as the cradle of American patriotism, the seat of learning and the nursery of literary culture, a community of shaded suburbs and countless churches. It may offend delicate sensibilities to read, again, of aspects of the real, the many peopled Boston, in whose unlighted and noisome tenement house hallways girls and women are attacked, by night and by day, from whose unsanitary corridors arises a stench that for the nearby families is both loathsome and unescapable; in whose basement "homes," sunless, reeking with moisture and pestiferous with vermin, men and women, many of them as well meaning as you or I, try vainly to rear children to a chance in life.

Not an agreeable topic, let us repeat, and still less alluring will be found the array of photographs from North End, West End, South End and South Boston at the exposition. These at least will prove to those capable of following such a demonstration that while we amuse ourselves mightily with arts, motor cars and movies, we still entertain perpetual pestilence in our midst; that while we rightly bewail the waste of fine young lives in the carnage welter of Europe we complacently permit the spoiling of proportionately more young lives in the sties and fire-traps of the capital city of — let us mouth that phrase that makes our fellow Americans of other sections so tired, of "our favored New England." The collection of pictures which the Women's Municipal League is sending to Beacon Hill should be by no means missed by those who follow the seasonal exhibitions of this town. They constitute indeed an art exhibition — an exhibition of the art of communal mismanagement; of the ignoble art of compelling human beings to go wrong.

"The object of the League is to educate and organize among the women of Boston and the surrounding communities an intelligent, representative public opinion which will exert its influence in the public service."

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AN ARRAY OF UNPLEASANT FACTS

If, surely, the Women's Municipal League had never before done anything to justify its aim here is where it has put squarely up to everybody a lot of disagreeable facts which there is no evading. Most of us have known for some time in a general way that Boston housing, outside of certain districts in which the privileged classes live, is about as bad as you can find anywhere. One of the things, indeed, accomplished by the Boston 1915 movement was to give us a certain pride in this city's evil distinction. At least, over in New York they could not claim to have the vilest living conditions of any American city. That superlative was definitely proved to belong to Boston. We accepted our medaille d'execration and held our heads high. America's greatest baseball town is also no slouch in the game of rotten tenements.

These photographic records of places in which thousands of human beings exist, and struggle, some of them, to live aright, amidst unspeakable squalor and physical hardships, might seemingly change complacent pride to a good old-fashioned conviction of sin. They are evidences of our culpable negligence. They come pretty near putting the brand of Cain on every privileged person's brow.

Yet, after all, they are simply a lot of photographs and photographic enlargements of rubbish heaps and cluttered fire escapes and densely peopled bedroom kitchens. They make at first sight on one who was brought up in a New England mill town an impression of much pother about generally accepted institutions. Miss Theodora Bailey, inspector for the league, having come hither from Wyoming, has been inexpressibly shocked to find

such things in "our favored New England." But heavens, they always have been so, at least always in the memory of folks born since the upgrowth of industrialism amongst us. Conditions are certainly not quite so bad as they were twenty-five years ago. Probably within another half century they may have been somewhat further improved. We move slowly in these Eastern communities; one would like to be able to add the antithetical "surely."

That there is no worst to come is at all events pretty sure after one has inspected Miss Bailey's big sheaf of flashlights. She has gone to the bottom of affairs, literally, for most of her pictures are of cellars, cellar tenements, fire hazards, sanitary and drainage defects. Some of them reveal apparent violations of law — such that, one would suppose, an alive district attorney might act upon them. Many more show practices and situations which presently will be prohibited by regulations more or less capable of enforcement.

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### The Truthful Snapshot.

The pictures were made by going out and getting them. Anyone with tact, good powers of observation and physical hardihood might have done likewise. Landlords have coöperated, generally; tenants, generally. Human kindness has mitigated the unpleasantness of the prying. It has not prevented frequent feeling of depression after a day spent among the sunless caves in which thousands of our kind are condemned to live. "Good constitution as I have," says Miss Bailey, "after a week of prowling around in these basements I find all sense of ambition and energy oozing. It is easy to imagine what would happen in a lifetime."

To each picture is appended a typewritten description of what the inspector observed and why she made the negative. These findings, in some cases, not only evince the difficulty under which a decent life is lived in the tenement but also the direct peril that for each and every one of us stalks in the darkness of the unsanitated basement.

The risks of disease and conflagration, of tainted manhood and womanhood disclosed in literally hundreds of these captions of Miss Bailey's pictures are not to be thought of as closely localized, as cribbed and confined within a single quarter. It is not a ghetto peril alone that we face. It is not merely a cleaning up of Little Italy that would give "cultured" Boston a clean bill of health. The photographs were made in many districts of the lesser city, and every one who knows anything about this territory is aware that if the inspector had gone into any one of several suburban cities she could have unearthed conditions nearly or quite as bad.

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### Slums Made for Millionaires

Some of the worst sanitations encountered anywhere were in the lodging-house quarter of the South End behind brick and brownstone fronts that were built for the wealthy of 1850. In this, as in other respects, the great district between Castle square and Massachusetts avenue is deceptive to the superficial observer. Because the houses were constructed for a different social class one often hears that the people now occupying them must be very fortunate; they have rooms and apartments in residences as well built as any in the Back Bay, and at very much lower rental. So they have, but in structures that were never intended to be occupied by several families and that often have only the most primitive arrangements for domestic comfort.

"Where is the law, that such barbarities as these can be demonstrated by the truth-telling camera?" it may be asked.

Well, consider without prejudice, the statement made regarding dark hallways in a recent printed report of the Women's Municipal League. We have heard as yet of no libel suit arising from the publication.

"During the summer," it was printed in a bulletin of last May, "a great deal of publicity was given to the need of more stringent laws to lessen the fire hazard in and around the city. In this connection our mayor has been particularly active since he assumed office. He is determined to do all in his power to prevent a recurrence of the 'Arcadia' disaster and others like it. One of the 'risks' given special mention in the newspapers was that of unlighted and improperly lighted hallways in tenement houses. The responsibility for this was placed at the door of the Building Department. The League called the attention of the press to the fact

that the acts of 1907 gave the Board of Health unlimited power in the matter of the lighting of halls in all houses occupied by more than three families, whereas, the fire laws of 1914 require the Building Department to see that halls in houses occupied by more than eight families are well and sufficiently lighted by gas or electricity.

"Up to November, 1914, the Board of Health had never seen fit to exercise its authority in this matter, even though in hundreds of multiple houses in our most thickly settled districts no means is provided for lighting halls at night, or the many halls which are entirely dark by day as well.

"Tenants sometimes provide lamps. We find them, dirty and uncared for, in the curve of a dark stairway or placed on a makeshift bracket insecurely fastened to the wall, yes, even resting on two long nails within a few inches of the ceiling, blackening the ceiling and scorching surrounding woodwork. The fire danger is immediately apparent in these cases, which are very common. In halls entirely without light the danger to life and limb in case of fire, also the moral risk to the family and its individual members, are very real things.

"We hear and read of girls being attacked in hallways, under cover of darkness, of men being shot by thoroughly alarmed tenants, when found prowling around without any apparent excuse; of men, women and children being badly frightened. In spite of all this, even though the authorities are fully aware of it, dark hallways continue to exist in our city."

How the Health Department for three months, beginning last November, vigorously exercised its duty of requiring halls in houses occupied by three or more families to be lighted by gas or electricity, is thereafter recorded in the bulletin. For a brief time "great things were accomplished in the North and West Ends, to our knowledge. The department tells us that about 600 lights were installed — more than 200 in the North End alone. In February, however, owners of three-family houses in a residential district where congestion is unknown and daylight is not at a premium, objected to the ruling of the board; a few of them asked for a private hearing; the board immediately weakened, the order was rescinded, and we again find ourselves, in this important matter, behind almost every large city in the States."

How helpless we now are against the perils of the dark hallway is proved in several striking pictures that will be seen at the State House. One of the most startling is "No. 99. A lamp shelf nailed to the sill of a small hall window. Note the dangerous slant. The window casing and sash are badly burned and charred. Compulsory lighting of hallways by gas or electricity would do away with this dangerous fire hazard."

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### Cellar Tenements Still with Us

Sleeping in cellars is supposed by many people to be a thing of the past hereabout. The supposition, however, is not borne out by the facts, as plenty of recent photographs owned by the Women's Municipal League will serve to prove. A characteristic example is shown in "24. Bedroom of three-room tenement, of which the third room is a large sized closet with slanting ceiling, under the main entrance. There is a three-quarter bed in which sleep the father, mother and a little child. There is no light or ventilation. The board of health ordered the place closed, and it was not used for a time, but it must be constantly reinspected or back they go.

"This little child, who sleeps in the dungeon with her parents, is getting a good start toward building up a constitution that will withstand future hardships, is she not?"

Copying counts from the damning indictment, one might go on almost endlessly. There is marked similarity in the discoveries. Evil conditions in the main breed true to type wherever found. They are not unmitigated with human striving. Many of the interiors of bedroom and kitchen show laudable efforts on the part of inmates to keep the fetid premises as tidy as possible. To live in a cellar apartment is not necessarily to abandon the fight against the cockroaches, a huge hidden colony of which is uncovered by one of the flashlights where they bred just behind a shelf neatly arrayed for a toilet table. Woman is ever the home maker wherever her lot is cast, and these photographs show often admirable ingenuity among people handicapped by no closet room or other conveniences that every middle-class person demands of her landlord. The men folks, too, do more or less tinkering to make more nearly habitable their places of abode. A broken drain

pipe, for example, in No. 127, has been patched by substitution of a piece of galvanized iron piping — not a very efficient makeshift, in all probability, but the tenant had probably tired of waiting for the landlord to repair the damage.

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### Sidelights on Slum Shopping

Some of us there are who now and then do a little shopping where our less favored brothers and sisters dwell and sell strange cheeses. It partakes of adventure to show off one's bad Italian in a tiny shop filled with timid and dark-eyed bambini clustered about the rotund mother. Besides, things are cheap and out of the ordinary. Even the bread has an Italianate flair of its own. So one makes little purchases now and then in such a basement store as represented in Miss Bailey's No. 10. It is a picturesque shop, with quite a bit of Old World color right here in said gray Boston. Old World color and Old World odors! A large family lives in the two rooms into which the store opens, and this is the picture which the inspector draws: "The woman hangs her clothes in the kitchen. The garbage and ash cans are in the rear close to the window."

This, then, is a chapter of the story of the other Boston — the Boston that shivers through severe winters in noisome rookeries; that patiently, for the pep of revolt is gone out of them, endures want of elementary conveniences that the most shiftless farmer would furnish to his stock; that harbors from year's end to year's end for the bane of us all the great white plague and the black night of insanity. Seven years have passed since Mr. Filene and his associates undertook, amidst much chaffing from the kind of people who make cheap game of the "uplift bunch," to render Boston something better than a repository for Revolutionary relics. A little has been accomplished since then by agitation and investigation, in face of the general inertia, but the magnitude of the work still to be done, as disclosed by this exhibit of the Women's Municipal League, is appalling. Picture after picture shows houses and rows of houses that in the interest of human rights ought to be razed at once before some holocaust gets them. Yet public authority is wanting even for remedial action, let alone such drastic treatment as some British municipalities have been enabled to apply to their festering slums. Wholesale emigration from the infested districts into suburban areas cannot be looked for, though that would largely solve the problem and force utilization of the land for other than residential purposes; the tax, however, of sixty cents per week per wage-earner on account of transportation stands right in the way of such a consummation.

Remedies for some of the worst of the evils may be broached at the forthcoming city planning conferences; the panacea no one will dare set forth. Meantime thanks will be due to the Women's Municipal League for the thoroughness with which Miss Amelia Ames' committee has investigated and recorded the shame of our community. The work, from all accounts, has been disagreeable enough. It is only human nature to blink away from foulness and filth. The animus that has kept the league's inspector tirelessly busy this past half year is felt in such a sentiment as this: "However, it is the vision of that day when the light that is breaking will reach every nook and corner that keeps us at it; that enables us to battle with the depression, discouragement and weariness within ourselves; and helps us share and lighten the load of those under the ban of a common oppressor."

## BOSTON'S FUTURE IN HOUSING — STEPS NECESSARY FOR MATERIALIZATION

The first need is for an awakened public conscience which will put human welfare above property rights. To advance property rights at the expense of human welfare is to throw upon the city, for the benefit of individuals, an ever-increasing cost for hospitals, prisons and relief which will ultimately undermine all property. This happens whether or not we consider the social and civic weakness of such a system, which of itself destroys property values.

Many places have recognized and acted upon these principles, notably Cleveland, where the Chamber of Commerce has led in housing reform and where for several years the board of health has been recruited from the trained membership of the chamber's housing committee, and in Minneapolis, where the Civic and Commerce Association puts civics ahead of commerce and gives its assistant secretary to housing work.

There should be no conflict between social and business agencies. The prosperity of every place is measured by the prosperity of all its people, by their self-reliance and their ability to work regularly, produce effectively, spend wisely, and pay their own way. Business interests in Boston have been slow to accept these principles and present conditions may be in part directly attributed to this. But Boston has many business men who wish Boston well, *all* of Boston, and they will sooner or later direct the activities of our larger business groups and interests towards the development of a better social and civic life, upon which alone may an enduring business situation be established. Men and women are beginning to see the bearings and relationships of human and economic problems. The women have led, let us admit, but the time is approaching when *all* the people, will more unitedly support real civic progress. And they will find it infinitely more satisfactory than anything they have ever tried. It is here that Boston has been slow, but men and women throughout the city see more, know more, and mean more than ever before in connection with these new problems, problems which have come upon us almost unawares and have been allowed to secure a serious hold, as this report abundantly shows. The problems are a result of our growth, a growth too little recognized, too little planned for, too little directed. With the recognition of this growth will come a consciousness of its great possibilities for good or evil and a determination to develop and appropriate its good and avoid its evils. This development will

best be accomplished by a full recognition of the dangers of rapid growth, by taking the necessary steps for directing that growth along the best lines, and by a fuller recognition of the favoring elements of our population. We have no lack of racial characteristics, the outstanding elements of which have the qualities necessary for the making of the nation of the melting pot. It is for Boston to learn to use the material and to produce an alloy which is finer, stronger, nobler than any one of its component elements. This is possible.

To accomplish this we must "Look not mournfully into the Past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the Present. It is ours." "Go forth to meet the * * * Future without fear, and with a manly heart." Boston has made mistakes, is making them today perhaps more numerously than at any time in her past. But she is not going to continue to make them. The stress of conditions has carried her too far. She is, however, beginning to see the drift and she has absolutely no cravings for the precipice which is visible.

Three technical steps are necessary. First, more carefully devised and more effectively enforced housing laws. These will provide that all old buildings shall be so maintained as to prove in no way a menace to their occupants. Boston will allow no man to coin the health, morals, and happiness of her people into material for her hospitals, prisons and institutions for relief. She will regulate the lighting and ventilation of her homes, the safety of their hall-ways and stair-ways, their sanitation and measurably their comfort. She will remove her people from damp, dark, miserable cellars and basements and guarantee to every inhabitant a share in the free air and sunshine which is the portion of every healthy life. She will injure the purses (incidentally possibly save the souls) of the few who would do damage for money, but she will at the same time create health, efficiency and happiness, which are money and more for every inhabitant.

Along with this, Boston will regulate the construction of new dwellings so that they will never be as bad as the worst of her old dwellings. The standards will rise, not fall. With the growing tendency to make the minimum the rule, she will see to it that the minimum is a little better than the prevailing custom, to the end that her laws may start an upward trend and not be to her citizens a virtual invitation to do worse than they have been in the habit of doing.

Having guarded her people from the outside she will teach

them to protect themselves and their landlords, to live in a cleanly, decent way. To live and to let live like cattle is fatal to social and economic advancement. Boston accepts this principle and she will ultimately practice it.

In the second place, Boston will plan her new ways and gradually re-work her old ones so that decent, endurable conditions may finally be established. This will apply to conditions within the home and to those outside which touch her people in the every-day life. New ways will be the result of design, and by the establishment of new building lines old ways will ultimately be made satisfactory. To illustrate:— Washington street, at its junction with Winter and Summer streets, is probably the most congested spot in the city. Three corners have been recently covered with new buildings at great expense. A remedy applied a few years ago would have been simple. To-day it can not be considered. It must result in inconvenience for all, and in ultimate loss. The number of people passing a given point in a given time decides its value as a place of business, provided those who pass can do so in comfort. If passage partakes of the nature of a football rush, where the play is by process of "plugging the line", considerate people will avoid it. Beyond a certain point the number of passers-by ceases to be a virtue. It becomes an actual menace. Here is a point the Boston of the future will take into consideration along with her other schemes for promoting healthy, comfortable growth.

Boston will consider a third question, that is how to promote a healthy growth of her housing facilities to the advantage of all. Growth can not be to the advantage of all if its benefits accrue almost exclusively to a few. Good laws, moreover, promote health and efficiency, but they do this only in proportion as they promote availability. Good homes are more expensive than poor ones, and, even though erected may not be occupied if the people have not the means.

The ever-recurring question is "How can we build good homes at a rental within reach of our people of small means?" If we are going to build better homes we must find a way. One way lies through a more just application of our tax laws. Like it or not, as we may, it is a part of the problem and a very important part.

When we wanted to get rid of phossy-jaw we imposed a tax upon the industry which produced it. Taxation tends to destroy. A tax upon homes tends to keep down their quality — particularly if that tax be unjust. We place an unjust tax upon

homes when we tax them more heavily than other forms of property. When a man builds a home the assessor taxes him as heavily as he can upon the house and taxes the land upon which it stands as a rule more heavily than the land alongside. The land alongside is just as valuable. Our laws require that taxes shall be equal upon each class of property. To tax improved land and improvements more heavily than unimproved land is to discourage home building, to increase its costs and to work hardship.

If we are going to discourage either homes or vacant lands, it should be the vacant lands. They house no one, they produce nothing, at least nothing for the community, and they increase the tax upon improved lands and improvements. If every other lot in a city were vacant the cost of streets, sewers, water supply, transportation, would all be just twice as great as if every lot were occupied. Our present system is not only wrong in principle but it makes the burden upon homes greater than it would be if our cities were developed continuously. Boston is not desirous, at least presumably not, of having more unoccupied land within her boundaries. Vacant lots do not help our business interests and they do nothing, worse than nothing for both business and homes, because they extend our service systems and are as a rule taxed differently from other property. Were they taxed as improved land they would carry the cost of the service extending past them. That cost is more than anywhere else placed upon improvements, upon homes, factories, mercantile establishments, etc.

Herein are outlined the three things which the Boston of the future will do. When put into operation, they will develop good homes. These in turn will develop capable people, capable of caring for themselves and for their city. Such people will support their city, not ask it to support them. They will be happy because they are useful. The city will be happy because it will be a place where men live well, to better ends. This is the aim of the ideal city and a city which has no ideal will not last.

Several movements now under way, or in the process of developing, properly adjusted to these ends, can gradually result in material improvements. The Women's Municipal League is the organization most directly active in improving conditions, but if the improvements outlined are to be accomplished they will be more successfully accomplished by a better understanding, and the development of a more definite objective, on the part

of all agencies working to the same general ends. Because of the results of bad housing in the way of producing problems for our settlements, charities, courts and other institutions, there should be a general movement, as there is already a general sense, in the direction of working out these problems together. The city planners are also getting under way. The Homestead Commission has in mind matters which affect, not only Boston, but the entire state. The Massachusetts Civic League has prepared a housing law covering all dwellings, which if adopted and assimilated would greatly help to improve conditions.

The point is, that here is a problem or a group of problems so fundamental in the advancement of the interests of the city, and at the same time so related with all the problems of our special agencies, that all agencies and interests ought to, and will ultimately, work together for a solution. The co-operation in this direction is infinitely greater than it was ten years ago. The appreciation of problems and their causes is based upon a broader understanding of conditions. The seriousness of the situation at the present moment lies not so much in a failure to understand, because the understanding is more general than it would seem, but because this understanding has not yet taken shape in community action and has therefore produced no concrete results.

The inter-relations of social problems and the better understanding of these inter-relations, as has been pointed out, will, at some time probably not far distant, result in a crystalization of opinion which will bind together all the people of the community working for the good of the community as a whole. Such a crystalization will do more in the way of concrete results than any individual line of work promoted on its own basis. It will react directly upon the city government and its various departments because they will be a part of it and a manifestation of it and the results will be what the general consensus of opinion demands that they should be. Beyond the dictates of public opinion, results can not be expected.

EDWARD T. HARTMAN,

Secretary, Mass. Civic League, and a member of the Advisory Committee of the W. M. L. Dept. of Housing.

## NOTES

An important state housing law now before the legislature has been presented by the Massachusetts Civic League.

It is more comprehensive than any law hitherto proposed and covers questions of light, ventilation, sanitation and fire-escapes in all types of dwellings, including one and two family as well as multiple houses, and, with regard to certain conditions, all houses already built as well as those to be built.—Owners of dwellings of all types should read the bill.

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The bill presented to the legislature by the Homestead Commission for the establishment and maintenance of agricultural instruction in cities and towns for families and individuals, is a bill which aims to relieve urban congestion by opening a path from the city back to the land.

The progress made by many of our new Americans in market gardening when the path to success has been all but barricaded against them is the best possible argument for this bill.

THIS BOOK IS DUE